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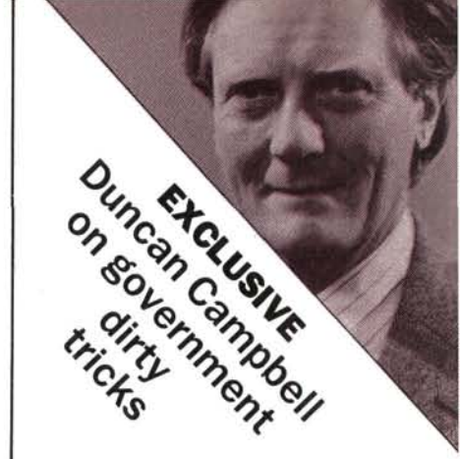

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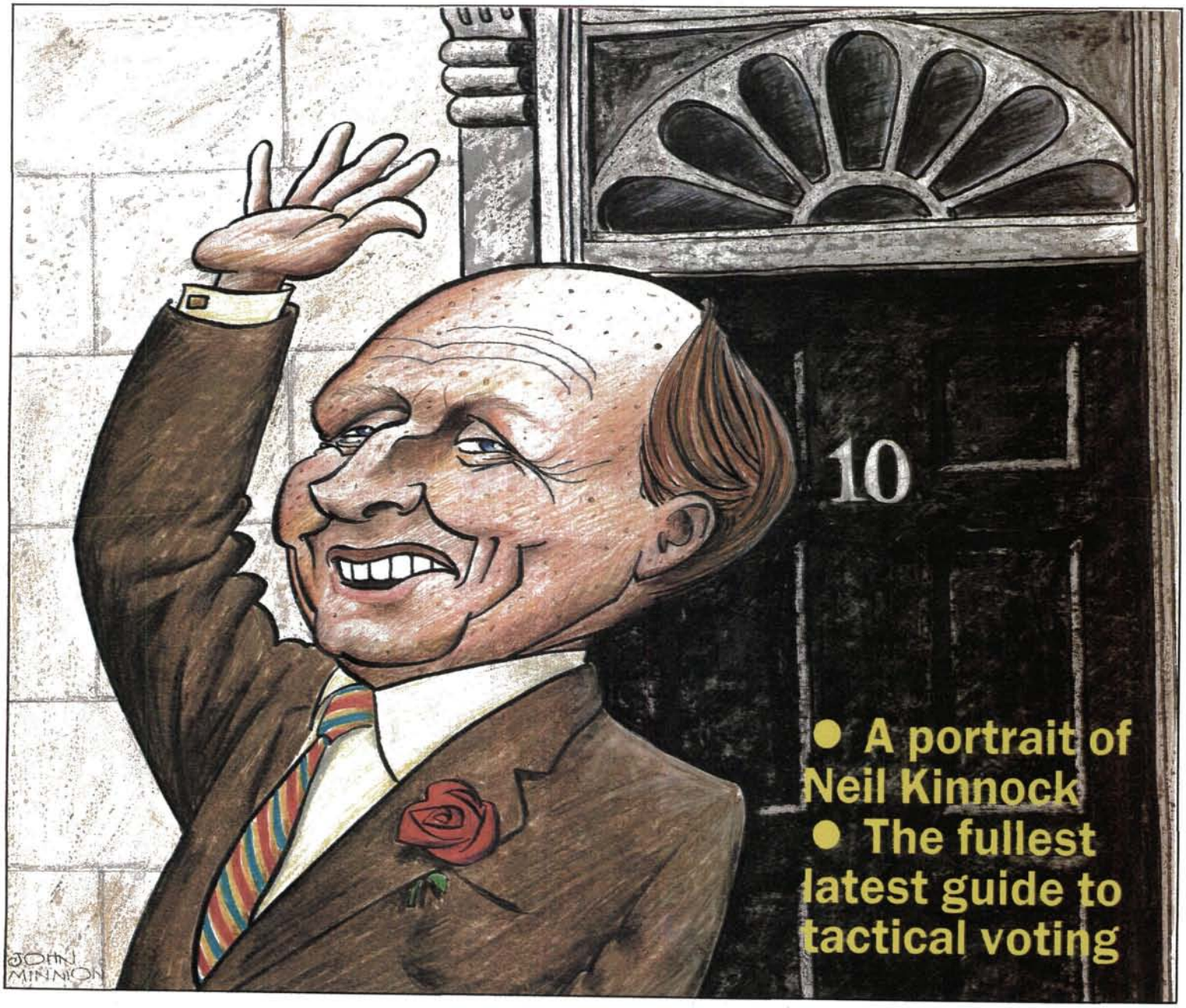

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NEW STATESMAN

Vol 113 No 2930 22 May 1987

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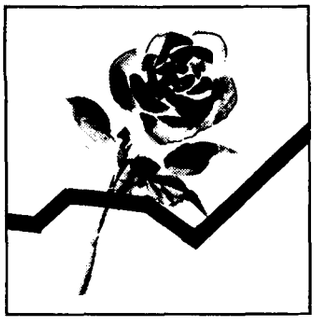
NEXT WEEK

A special report on the US organisation which finances right-wing front groups in Britain — and its ambitions for a world movement; plus — is Independent Television illegal? Sarah Benton on Margaret Thatcher, and full election coverage

It is possible



THE FIRST and best burst of speed in the election campaign has come from Labour. Getting blast-off from a paint-blistering speech from Neil Kinnock last Friday, Labour has managed to retain an initiative which has been refreshed by an improving standing in the polls, especially in the marginals. It appears to be taking support both from the Conservatives and from the Alliance, which has been unable convincingly to sustain its claim that it is now poised to replace Labour as the main opposition party.

The Conservative start, by contrast, has been on any count unimpressive. From the Prime Minister's arrogant demand for at least two more terms in her early interviews (quickly covered over later), the Tory campaign has seemed at once flat and smug. The Alliance, for its part, looks breathless and disorganised, with the dual leadership imposing a strain for the two leaders and for a public which no longer sees it as a pleasing novelty.

These early impressions are underpinned by the manifestos, all published earlier this week. The Alliance document had a radical edge to be sure — especially on the 'liberal' issues, like freedom of information, equal representation of women on public bodies — of which Labour still fights shy. But in backing away into fudge over private health and education, it cedes practical ground it rhetorically claims for its own when it proposes a classless and more equal society.

The Conservative Party had promised a radical manifesto, and it has delivered it. It will encourage more private education and private health care. It will cut back on public spending at a time when the need for publicly funded reconstruction is acute. It will privatise much of the remaining public sector — water and electricity for sure, possibly coal and steel as well.

Most radically of all, it will continue, on being granted a third term, to preside over 3m-plus unemployment without a visible commitment to tackling it. It is a radically damaging set of proposals to lay before a country ever more sharply divided in terms of income and life chances. If implemented, the programme would soon render false the claim in the manifesto's conclusion that 'Britain is a stable and well-governed country'. Four more years of such radicalism would kiss goodbye to stability.

LABOUR'S MANIFESTO is a modest document, mute tribute to the grandiosity of its 1983 predecessor. It has the marks of the fudger upon it, notably in the section on defence, where prosecution of a non-nuclear programme is made sensibly secondary to the progress of arms reduction talks. From time to time, a jagged rock sticks up marking the site of old skirmishing: the sentence 'the Home Office will remain responsible for regulatory and statutory powers in relation to broadcasting' is one such, marking the location of Kaufman's ambush, or Buchan's Last Stand.

But it has at its head these opening two paragraphs: 'For our first two years in government we will concentrate resources on the essential tasks of combating unemployment and poverty. In the course of that action, we will strengthen the health, housing, education, social services and crime-fighting services that are vital to social and economic well-being, and begin to rebuild our manufacturing industry. Clearly, all other programmes that require public finance must take lower priority in terms of timescale and public resources.'

In these sentences, Labour has staked its best claim for government and its best claim to be preferred to other parties. In making the marginalised millions the centrepiece of its politics, Labour has demonstrated its true and consistent radicalism — a radicalism which is neither trendy nor vague, but rooted in the worst experiences of the least powerful of people over the past eight years.

More than that: it has — belatedly, to be sure — recognised that popular fears of rising crime merit instant and urgent attention, seen that it must seriously address the modernisation of the industrial base in order to face up to the decades ahead with a declining oil revenue, and refused to promise more than it can foresee that it can afford.

It is the realistic programme of a party which has got its priorities right. It is necessary: and it is also possible. □

Andrew Lumsden

Andrew Lumsden, formerly associate editor of the *New Statesman*, has left the magazine. He will retain a fortnightly column in the Backchat section. Andrew's journalism, from the unique (in a national paper) perspective of an openly gay journalist, won widespread praise and support. We greatly appreciate the contribution he made to the *NS* in the more than three years he was on its staff. ●

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DIARY

New Delhi

Rajiv Gandhi has now been in charge of India long enough — over two years — to know the essential truth about his magical sub-continent: a deeply discomforting truth long understood by the Nehru dynasty that has ruled India, apart from a few brief interludes, since independence from the British 40 years ago. 'The battle against backwardness', Rajiv tells people all the time, 'can only be won through massive industrialisation. We must establish a more dynamic economy . . .' Then he slaps his sides with frustration, as his mother used to do and even his grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru. 'There is tremendous inertia in the system (he might just as easily have said 'in India'). We cannot reverse the whole system quickly . . .'

Indeed not. The soul of India isn't made that way. India is less, far less, reversible than almost any other great ship of state. Not simply because the blanket of an ancient civilisation, which was old when Rome was in its infancy, hangs over every cowpatch and village mystic; but because the statistical game is like a huge barrier reef of Everests lying across the path of rational progress and coherent economic policies. That India has made the progress she has in the 40 years since the Raj departed is itself a remarkable achievement. That fact alone will dominate the celebrations in August.

○

The statistical game fills any observer with awe. In 1947, in that extraordinary dawn as the Mountbattens were saluting the transfer of power, India's population was about 300 million. Now it is over 700 million. By 1990 it will have risen to around 850 million and by the year 2,000 there will be almost one billion Indian stomachs to feed. In 1947 life expectancy was 30. Today, with the modest progress in social and health conditions and the economic improvements of the last few years, it has shot up to 55. Education is expanding all the time: yet illiteracy across the sub-continent remains at over 60 per cent and in some of the more remote rural areas, immovably suspicious of any form of teaching which questions several thousand years of tradition, it is much higher. Some 40 per cent of India's population continues to be seriously under-nourished. And in parts of rural India, where drought has wiped out crops and where the land is naked and parched, the statistics, like the peoples' bodies, are in far worse shape.

It is a monumental task simply to push this huge boulder a few inches uphill each year, an agonising and perpetual fight to try to limit the corruption which is so endemic among the commercial entrepreneurial classes as well as senior (and junior) civil servants who fatten their earnings with bribes from the lengthy queues of applicants constantly seeking favours for their trade and contracts with government. Weighed against all this the achievement has been remarkable — an average economic growth rate of 5 per cent since 1980 which Delhi regards as the 'take off' year following a long spell of difficulties. Twenty years ago India was a huge importer of food and on the verge of mass starvation: an agricultural revolution has now reversed all that.

○

John Kenneth Galbraith was in Delhi on a kind of 'sentimental journey', recalling his years as President Kennedy's Ambassador to India. The veteran sage is of course a renowned Indophile and he expressed himself as 'very impressed' with India's economic progress, adding that he expected further rapid development in the next decade. I am sure he is correct in general terms. But that cannot disguise the enormity of the task that continues to confront any Indian government.

China is frequently held up as an example of how Communist rule can more effectively speed up and transform an ancient civilisation. It is an old argument. But in India's case I think it is probably a tempting illusion. I doubt whether a Chinese-style system could work effectively in India. There is, in a deeper sense, a stronger *indifference* — rather than *resistance* — to change in India than I have ever encountered in China. In China I felt a palpable surge of energy and a commitment to change. That is much harder to find in India. Indeed one sometimes feels, in India, that the whole cavalcade of the human condition in all its perversity, and frequent absurdity, is forever passing across the eye of the camera.

○

Delhi has increasingly become an international showpiece capital. The modern hotel architecture is superb: American sleeknes with an Eastern massaging. It all seems to fit with the grandeur of Lutyens Delhi — although a number of the new hotels remain unfinished because the capital resources have run out. That too is all part of the great Indian paradox.

Not 20 kilometres out of New Delhi one is thrust back 400 or 500 years in history to mud-hut settlements where there is a complete absence of any amenities. There they squat, the women, the children, the old, the crippled and the lazy. A few sticks of dried wood are raked together for a primitive fire on which home-shaped pots are used to cook a basic meal. The able-bodied men, and women, stoop in a nearby field scratching away at dry earth.

A few more kilometres away from this scene there is a nuclear power station . . . or a modern industrial complex employing highly sophisticated university-trained scientists and technicians who travel to work in their own cars (Japanese in all likelihood). The world's most populous democracy struggles to bridge an impossible gap.

○

Nehru believed that a modern socialist and democratic approach to the vast range of social and economic problems would, in time, provide an answer to India's explosive tinder-box of religious and caste divisions as well as nature's difficult bequest. His mentor, Mahatma Gandhi, was less convinced about that and Indira Gandhi, Nehru's proud daughter, became increasingly sceptical of achieving any rapid route to her father's dreams. Rajiv has inherited all these formidable problems, the doubts, the uncertainties.

When he took over, just over two years ago, then still under 40, he was very green, idealistic but with an enormous store of goodwill. His popularity has slipped a lot since then. Rajiv is a quiet, careful, methodical ex-airline pilot used to operating within the fixed scientific rules of aviation. Now he has no pilot's compass by which he can fly; no precise ideological map to steer to. Even the contours of national identity which existed, albeit briefly, in his grandfather's day, have been eroded by sectarian tendencies all over the sub-continent, and especially among the Sikhs. How ironic that there is now almost only one umbrella of national cohesion: the English language, the lingua franca which somehow manages to bind together the disparate loose strands of this infuriatingly attractive land.

○

Natwar Singh, the Minister of State for External Affairs, invited me into his elegant office and gestured toward a painting on the wall which stares down at him as he works from his spacious desk. It was, of course, a painting of Mohamas Karamchand Gandhi (who else, indeed?) in that unforgettable posture of the Mahatma, walking, armed only with a simple slender cane, through the wilderness, a priest in the villages, the focal point of all-India.

Minister Singh gestured toward the wall hanging. 'Sometimes', he sighed, 'I think we have all strayed too far away from him.' '*That*', he said slowly, 'is India.' Maybe. But Natwar Singh, a close friend and ally of Rajiv Gandhi, knows only too well that India cannot remain that way, and will not. The great land is already on the way to something else.

Geoffrey Goodman

ROGER WODDIS

Our man in Fiji

'Would Rabuka have acted as he did without any assurance of influential support inside or outside the archipelago?' — Guardian

What do you do when the wind is changing,
When something of substance hits the fan?
You look around for a likely Colonel,
Who swears his masters are not external,
And give the 'go' to your hired man.

Government yields to the strong in Fiji,
Law is what comes from the lovely gun.
Never be fearful of those elected;
Given a dollar or two injected,
Yesterday's yearnings can be undone.

Only democracy-buffs remember
April the eleventh or July the fourth.
When popular passions are brave and brewing,
There's always a job the rich want doing
By a paid Ramboka or an Olly North.

What do you do, though the Queen is livid?
How do you silence the nukeless mugs?
When a vote gone wrong is a grievous error
(Being, or course, opposed to terror),
You talk of freedom and send in the thugs.

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Non-macho micro

THE LABOUR movement once talked about a new working class made up of computer programmers, high-tech designers and software engineers. That was back in the 1960s when Clive Jenkins was a proto-yuppie and the technological revolution was, if not exactly white hot, then at least still glowing.

Instead of coming up with policies for this new salariat, whose interests were not self-evidently catered for by the Conservative Party, the Labour Party became increasingly entangled with the old working class — the miners, steelworkers and carhands whose jobs needed defending — and the new sub-classes in the inner cities. The result, predictably, was that workers in the new industries drifted away from Labour. They tended to live in places like Stevenage, Basildon, Swindon, Slough and Cambridge — precisely the constituencies which Labour has been struggling to win.

Labour has at last done something about it. This week, it published 'A Strategy for Information Technology', a 46-page paper drawn up by a group led by John Smith, Labour's shadow industry secretary. The political burden resting on it shines through one give-away sentence in the introduction. 'Labour's strategy is just as vital for the systems analyst in Reading and the telephone engineer in Glasgow as it is for the car worker in Cowley and the textile designer in Nottingham,' it boasts.

The paper goes beyond simply bashing the government's high-tech pretensions — Britain's annual trade deficit in electronics, computing and telecommunications is now well over £1bn — to setting out a strategy. Action to tackle skill shortages, restoration of cuts in the science budget, funding help for new start-up companies, more support through public purchasing, greater co-ordination of high-tech policy in Whitehall — these policies, all in Labour's paper, are the sorts of demands which high-tech workers make when talking about their industry.

Labour's new policy also recognises that, since some high-tech products cost £1bn just to develop, much of Britain's high-tech future must lie in alliances in Europe. Above all, it talks of helping, not forcing, the industry to do things. 'The new research and production centres we are proposing will support the industry. They will not dictate to it,' John Smith explains. This may not sound macho, but it is the only option when, to the average Labour politician, gallium arsenide sounds like a substance to be used in inner-party struggle.

David Thomas

David Thomas is a journalist on the Financial Times.

Are the Tories funded legally?

THE COMPANY donations which fuel the Tory propaganda machine are of doubtful legality, according to a book published this week by Keith Ewing, a law specialist at Cambridge University.* They have never been directly tested in the courts, but three recent related cases 'have blown the matter wide open', giving judges discretion to decide from case to case whether the form of words in a company's memorandum of association gives the directors the power to make political donations.

● In the *Horsley and Weight* case in 1982, the Court of Appeal held that even if the memorandum gave directors the *power* to make 'charitable and public donations' (the usual phrase), this would not be legal unless it were *also* in pursuit of a 'dominant or main object' of the company.

● In *Simmonds*, 1983, Justice Mervyn-Davies ruled that the League Against Cruel Sports (a company limited by guarantee) could make a £30,000 donation to the Labour Party for the purpose of publicising its animal welfare policies, but could not make another £50,000 donation which had been paid without strings into the party's 1979 general election fund. It's strange that the only court case against a company over a political donation should be one contributing to the Labour Party: it raises the possibility that payments to the Conservatives are illegal unless earmarked specifically for campaigns to promote private enterprise.

● In *Rolled Steel*, 1985, Lord Justice Slade confused things further by making a distinction between what a company is allowed to do and what its directors may legally get up to. He said that a company could be empowered to make donations, but if directors made donations that weren't to the company's benefit, the company should sue the directors for breach of duty.

Ewing concludes that legislation — the ballot requirement in the 1984 Trade Union Act — operates in a partisan way to hinder union support for Labour. 'And no attempt is made to discipline the financial advantage which the Tories enjoy in elections: this could be done, as in Canada, by imposing a ceiling on the amount spent on advertising in a campaign,' he says.

This wouldn't matter so much, perhaps, if everything were done openly. 'What is not acceptable is secrecy: neither the Tories nor the Alliance parties give full details of the amount or source of corporate support they receive. This is particularly paradoxical in the case of the Alliance, given their commitment to openness. *Glasnost* begins at home.'

John Rentoul

*Keith Ewing, *The Funding of Political Parties in Britain*, Cambridge University Press £19.50.

Marginalia

TV 87, the tactical voting campaign (see p12) wants to organise opinion polls in marginal constituencies to identify the best-placed candidate to oust the Tory. In the meantime, bookmakers Coral have drawn up odds on the outcome of the election in 93 marginals. It makes dismal reading for Labour (or opportunity for great profit for those convinced that Labour will do well). In Cambridge, for example, SDP president Shirley Williams is given a 2 to 1 chance of winning, with Labour well back at 10 to 1, despite having beaten the Alliance in the 7 May local elections.

The following list is a selection of Coral's odds as of Monday, with the favourites in bold type and the third-placed in italic (where a party is odds-on to win this means Coral think it has a better than even chance).

	Con	Lab	Lib/SDP
Birmingham Yardley (Con)	**1-4 on**	2-1	*20-1*
Brecon & Radnor (Lib)	**4-5 on**	*5-1*	6-4
Cambridge (Con)	**1-3 on**	*10-1*	2-1
Chelmsford (Con)	5-4	*50-1*	**1-2 on**
Colne Valley (Lib)	2-1	2-1	**5-4**
Edinburgh S (Con)	**5-4**	**5-4**	*3-1*
Greenwich (SDP)	—	2-1	**1-5 on**
Islington S (Lab)	*6-1*	2-1	**2-5 on**
Nottingham N (Con)	6-4	**2-5 on**	*33-1*
Putney (Con)	**1-10 on**	5-1	—
Stirling (Con)	**1-2 on**	7-4	*10-1*

● On the overall election results, the bookies start the campaign unanimous, but not much changed from last week. All of them have Labour 6-1 against winning the most seats, and all report no one coming forward with 'real money' (four-figure sums) even at this price. The Tories are at 8-1 on (that is, a 1 in 9 chance of not being the largest party), and the Alliance at a hopeless 33 to 1.

Labour has dipped in the betting on the precise number of seats each party will win. The consensus between IG Index and City Index, bookies to brokers, is Tory 369 seats (up 11 on last week), Labour 214 (down 11) and Alliance 47 (no change). More ominously for Labour, William Hill have shortened their odds on the Alliance getting more votes in total than Labour to 2 to 1 because so many people put money on at 3 to 1.

John Rentoul

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The East-East divide

Prague

'IT'S IRONIC that you can even mention *glasnost* in connection with Czechoslovakia. It was only international and national solidarity which influenced our treatment.' This blunt assessment comes from Thomas Krivanek, a Jazz Section organiser serving a suspended sentence for his involvement in the now-banned organisation.

The Prague appeal court's announcement last week that the 16- and ten-month sentences imposed two months ago on Jazz Section leaders Karel Srp and Vladimir Kouril would not be increased was quickly interpreted as an example of *glasnost*. But although this trial has been unusually public — Western journalists were allowed official translators in the courtroom, and the crowds of some 200 Czechoslovakia supporters left unharassed — it shouldn't have taken place at all.

Thoughts that Mikhail Gorbachev would wave a magic wand of reform — and there were many before his visit this March — were soon put to rest. Almost any Czech citizen can quote by heart Gorbachev's 'unofficial' remark about the pluralistic mess Prime Minister Husak had to clear up after the Prague Spring: 'I was here in 1968 . . . I saw how disorientated young people were . . . There were 17 different youth organisations. What disorder . . .'

Certainly, there *are* signs of change. There is a clear recognition by the yuppie, technocratic generation of party cadres of the need for greater economic efficiency. But so far proposed changes for the programme due to be announced on 15 June are piecemeal. There are even fewer signs of a political or cultural relaxation. Jiri Exner, chairman of the Jazz Section support committee, drew a sombre lesson: 'Gorbachev has his problems, and we have ours. We have to help ourselves.'

Several other cases will further test the willingness of Husak to loosen control. On Wednesday, two brothers went on trial after almost a year in detention. Pavel Wonka had presented himself as an independent candidate in last spring's elections to the Federal assembly. He was arrested for distributing his election programme — an up-to-date version of the Prague Spring — and faces up to five years in prison. His brother faces up to three years' imprisonment for complaining about the treatment meted out to Pavel.

Petr Pospichal, a printer from Brno in Southern Czechoslovakia, also faces up to three years for distributing Charter material and for his contacts with Polish Solidarity — for spreading 'the Polish disease'. A support group — only the second to be established for an individual — has been set up to help Pospichal, who at 27 has already served two prison sentences for Charter activity. His case is seen as a crucial one, because of his popularity among young people and the importance given to improving links between Eastern bloc countries.

The security services of all the Warsaw Pact countries often co-operate to stop known activists from crossing borders. At an international seminar organised by the independent Freedom and Peace Group in Warsaw this month, participants were all from Poland and Western countries save for one Charter 77 representative. Activists from other Eastern bloc countries had to be content with sending messages of support.

'When I speak to a member of Charter 77 we understand each other immediately. It's only the difference of the article number of the penal code. We are subjects of the same empire,' said Jacek Szymanderski, one of the seminar organisers.

Multilateral co-operation is difficult to arrange. The first major such effort, sponsored by the London-based East European Cultural Foundation (ECF), was launched last year in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and East Germany. It marked the 30th anniversary of the Hungarian uprising with a unique statement of the political principles common to independent East European movements. The ECF has now been asked to become a more permanent co-ordinating body. The next item on the agenda is a joint statement about conscientious objection to military service and free movement between the Warsaw Pact countries.

Susan Greenberg

If the caption fits

No 18

Now we do understand that, in the heat of the moment, you may find it difficult to achieve *subtlety* in providing a caption for the above windblown pair. But do try. You did so well with the anything-but-subtle Ms Currie below. Entries here by Monday 1 June, please. Usual £10 book token of our affection for the winner.

No 16: winner

Edwina: 'It . . . it called me "mother" . . .' (*Steve Horton, London N10.*) Hon mensh: '. . . and, most important, there is no risk of infection.' (*Jeff Thomas, Kew.*)

NEW STATESPERSON

The Free Press Man

HE SITS for hours in a car outside a Capitol Hill town house in Washington, waiting for the door to open. He flits about the fringes of the Scottish Conservative Party conference, picking up the eagerly muttered tales of another party leader's adultery. He hooks into a network which still resonates with the word that a senior Labour Party official is gay, and lives with another man.

He is a Free Press. He is What the Public Wants to Read. He Knows a Good Story when He Sees One. He is the contemporary terror of the political world.

Sometimes, as in the case of Jeffrey Archer, he scores a spectacular success. In arranging for £2,000 to be paid over to a prostitute to leave the country, Archer was caught 'bang to rights'. But sometimes the victim refuses to be cornered. Sir Ralph Halpern, the Burton's boss, said 'Good Morning' and nothing else to the press after the Sunday tabloids had revealed an extraordinarily vigorous affair with a teenage model. A subsequent shareholders' meeting gave him a vote of confidence: as long as the share price was climbing, Sir Ralph could do what he liked.

Sir Ralph's success in brazening it out led to speculation that the finger-pointers of Fleet Street or Miami can be faced down; that a revelation which is frankly confirmed with a 'So what?' could cease to harm.

That worked for Halpern, but could not work for Hart, nor for most leading political figures. Politicians live by images, one of which is the family. Bringing the spouse into the act helps spread a warm glow but lays a sand track round the marriage which must never show straying footprints.

So the only tactic available is denial, and hope that it goes away, that the newspaper hasn't got photographs or sworn statements. And since that tactic is resorted to so routinely, the politicians' word is devalued: and scepticism covers liar and truthteller alike.

Does the present prominence of the Free Pressmen mean that papers are picking up on a new puritanism? Possibly — but unlikely. More plausible is the market explanation: that the tabloid press knows sex sells, and is constantly pushing out the boundaries of sexual coverage. That means the editors are no longer willing to confine the knowledge, or suspicion, that public figures are adulterers or gay to the political, journalistic and official in-groups. Plausible, too, is the political explanation: that a smear is probably worth a few votes to the government, especially when it can also take the high moral ground of condemning the journalism. But the market is the stronger one: nailing a politician during an election is done, in part, because they are on TV so much.

The British Free Pressman's is a dirty trade — but at least he doesn't have to suffer it being inflated, given semi-constitutional status, as has happened in the US since the unmaking of Gary Hart. 'A bloody good story', says the Free Pressman, and settles down until the next one comes along. And it will. And the Public will Want to Read It. ●

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PETER KELLNER

There is more to life than beating Mrs Thatcher

HOW VITAL is it to defeat the Conservatives? The answer is surely self-evident to most *NS* readers: its importance dwarfs all else. Really? Here are some contributions to a partisan's version of *Scruples*, 'the game of moral dilemmas'.

- You have arrived too recently in the area to appear on the electoral register. Some friends have moved away, but their names have been left on. As the constituency is a Conservative/Labour marginal and every vote counts, do you and your partner personate your friends?
- You have acquired information about the private life of your local Conservative MP. While he presents himself as a happily married family man, you have proof that he is having an affair with the headmistress of a local comprehensive school. Do you publicise this fact?
- Would your answer be any different if she were the headmistress's 18-year-old daughter? Or, instead of her daughter, her son?
- You are a Labour supporter but live in a constituency where Labour won only 15 per cent support in 1983. The local Liberal, with 38 per cent, was just nine points behind the Conservative. You judge that Labour cannot win the seat this time, but the Liberal can. She is a supporter of CND. How do you vote?
- The figures are the same, but the Alliance candidate belongs to the SDP and supports Dr Owen on nuclear weapons. How do you vote now?

Presumably, if there were no greater imperative than to eject Mrs Thatcher from Downing Street, there are circumstances where it would be moral for a Labour activist to personate another voter, smear the local Tory candidate and vote SDP. Far-fetched, I grant; my point is that to behave in a more principled way is to concede that there is something more important about this election campaign than its outcome; for want of a better word, let us call that something 'democracy'.

We have become a touch too blasé about our democracy. We take our general elections for granted and accept the cynical behaviour that attends them. Too easily we overlook the fact that they are a recent, and still too rare, innovation in the evolution of humankind.

DEMOCRACY is not only, or even mainly, about winning. It is about universal adult suffrage; about the right to vote according to one's beliefs; about acknowledging the sovereign power of the electorate; about losing but remaining part of the political system.

Of all the features of democracy the most crucial but the least comfortable is the role of the defeated. It is the status of the loser that distinguishes a democracy from a dictatorship far more vividly than the status of the winner. Those who wield power have many similarities, whatever the form of government: they have ministers to appoint, resources to control and armies to command. Even their constraints are in practice often the same: what the economy will bear, what the Americans (or Russians) will permit, what neighbouring states will put up with.

What makes democracies special are their elected oppositions. They lost their bid for power last time, but have not surrendered their right to fight for it next time. They provide tangible evidence not only of electoral choice, but of the belief that winning isn't everything.

It is worth returning to these basics at election time, in order to remember what this campaign is fundamentally about. In my view it is not, at root, about deposing Mrs Thatcher or promoting socialism; if it were, it would be tempting to resort to far more radical measures. This election is about what all elections are ultimately about: the operation of a democratic system.

That is why the first three, at least, of the 'moral dilemmas' I posed at the beginning of this column are not, or should not be, dilemmas at all. To personate and to smear are wrong. They disfigure democracy. There is no morally acceptable calculus that allows the means to justify the ends. It is better to fight clean and lose than to fight dirty and win. (Fortunately, fighting dirty can be counter-productive: it looks as if last weekend's squalid attempts by some tabloid newspapers to smear David Steel have backfired. My argument, however, rests not on whether gutter journalism works, but whether it is ever justified, even by a greater good.)

> ***'There are principles involved in the act of voting that transcend the immediate calculation about who will win and who will lose'***

The same point about the primacy of democratic values can be extended. It is what underpins the idea of free speech, a fair legal system and freedom of information. None of these things exist adequately: if they were to be extended there are times when they would doubtless embarrass and even harm a radical government. The case for extending them is located in the case for a more complete democracy. We might hope that Britain would be better governed as a result, but that cannot be our main argument; for if arguments for democracy are to be harnessed to arguments for utility, then if that utility is not achieved, democracy is jeopardised. *Democracy must be defended for its own sake, not because it will make the economy grow faster, or cut the dole queues quicker, or eliminate poverty*. There may be more authoritarian ways of achieving these things; they do not justify abandoning our freedoms.

TACTICAL VOTING is not as heinous a crime as some other assaults on democratic principles, but I believe it still distorts the electoral process. It too elevates the defeat of Mrs Thatcher above all else — and in particular above the idea that a general election is an occasion for each voter to express a view about which party best reflects his or her ideals and aspirations.

By 'tactical voting' I mean, specifically, Labour supporters who are tempted to vote Alliance to defeat the incumbent Tory (although the argument can be applied equally to anyone contemplating voting for a second-choice candidate). I am *not* referring to 'negative voting'. If people genuinely don't mind what kind of non-Conservative government we have, then it is reasonable to consider which local candidate has the best chance of defeating the Tories. Tactical voting in its proper sense involves a conscious rejection of the party you favour.

If the alternative is an anti-nuclear Liberal candidate who has a chance of victory, then some will find that second choice attractive. But what of the Owen clone? If the over-riding purpose is to deprive the Tories of their majority in Parliament, this ought not to matter. An Alliance candidate is an Alliance candidate, and that's that. Yet the tactical waverer who might consider a cuddly Liberal but not the tough-and-tender Social Democrat is conceding my point: that there are principles involved in the act of voting that transcend the immediate calculation about who will win and who will lose.

Those reading this week's *NS* feature on tactical voting and thinking of switching to the Alliance should be aware of what they are doing. A vote for the two Davids is not simply a vote against the Tories. It is a vote against Labour and a vote for: weakening trade unions, greater feather-bedding for Britain's farmers, continuing the present privatisation programme, and the maintenance of a 'minimum nuclear deterrent'. For anyone who believes in those policies it is right that they should have a chance to vote for the Alliance, and right that they should take that chance.

But for those who believe broadly in Labour's programme: who want new laws to protect the rights of trade union members: who want public utilities like gas and telecommunications restored to social ownership: who want security of tenure for tenants in private housing: who want a defence policy that does not rely on the use of nuclear weapons — for them, a tactical vote would be as unprincipled an act as personation or smearing the private life of an opponent.

Just in case there are socialists in Richmond or Chelmsford or Bath whom I have not yet convinced, then ponder this. Suppose your vote does not contribute to Mrs Thatcher's downfall — either because the Tories hold on locally, or because they lose too few seats nationally. Suppose, however, that your tactical decision helps the Alliance to overtake Labour in the national popular vote. You will end up having done infinitely more harm to Mr Kinnock's prospects than Mrs Thatcher's. Is that what you really want? □

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PROFILE

Neil Kinnock: the possibility of power

JOHN LLOYD, *with* COLLEEN JOHNSON, *profiles the Labour leader and assesses a four-year record of achievement*

> Only a Labour Party which can illustrate the relevance of socialism to the manager as well as the mechanic, to the technician and the teacher, the home owner alongside the council tenant, the majority as well as the minorities, can hope to convert its plans into effect by gaining the power to nurture success properly and defeat disadvantage conclusively.
>
> *Neil Kinnock, Fabian Lecture, 12 November 1985*

THUS DID Neil Kinnock read back to himself his own job description. In the past four years, each day of which has been chiselled into a once open and cheery face, he has sought to transform his party into the vehicle for relevant socialism. He has very largely succeeded: but will that success allow him, in a typically over-padded phrase, to 'gain the power to nurture success properly'?

It has been said many times that he was perfect stock for his post. The son of a miner-turned-steelworker and a nurse who limited themselves to one child to give that one a better chance in life, he was born into a consciously socialist family in a naturally Labour environment. Robert Harris, his first biographer, writes that 'His great good fortune was to have been born at a time, in a family, in a community, where it was still possible naturally to drink in a radical, pragmatic form of socialism without having to suffer the poverty and the hardship which originally produced it'. Like many only children who drive themselves to success, he had a mother who drove him first: to grammar school, which he didn't like and to university, where he didn't want to go but where he met Glenys.

They must have cut brilliantly glamorous figures at the University College Cardiff of the early 1960s: not just because of their good looks, nor even because they were the leaders of radical politics and of the students' union, but because the tide was running so strongly for youth then, especially for that part of it — and it was quite numerous — which had scrambled in, without enormous difficulty, to universities from working-class or lower middle-class families, and thus to a period of life dizzyingly more free and privileged than the closely supervised apprenticeshipes or repetitive service jobs which, a decade or more before, might have been their only choice.

Kinnock has been so *lucky*, as Harris makes the theme of his portrait: but some of it was the luck of a part of a generation. He has repaid that luck by recognising what created it: state provision paid for by those who did not benefit from it themselves, for their and others' children's sakes: hence one of his greatest speeches has enshrined the concept of an 'enabling state . . . (which) means the collective contribution of the community for the purpose of individual liberty throughout the community'. And in a passage added late to his back-on-form speech to the Welsh Labour Party last week,he made the life chances of the Kinnocks a national symbol: 'Why am I the first Kinnock in a thousand generations to go to university? Why was Glenys the first woman in her family to be able to go to university? Was it because all our predecessors were thick? Did they lack talent, these people who could sing and play and recite and write poetry, these people who could make wonderful, beautiful things with their hands, who could dream dreams, see visions . . .'

Not a great job

If these are the wells which refresh his radicalism, he seems to have had a canny conservative streak which held him back from being ultra about it. His most recent biographer, Michael Leapman, says of him that 'the strongest and most consistent thread running through his political philosophy is that legitimacy can only be conferred through the ballot box'. That view, operating in differing ways, held him back from taking the easily popular position in Welsh devolution in the 1970s, and led him to abstain from voting for Tony Benn in the 1981 leadership election. Kinnock wrote in *Tribune* at this time that 'through an inaccurate analysis of the position and power of the labour movement and by a tactically mistaken decision to contest the deputy leadership in 1981, Tony has significantly harmed the current standing and electoral opportunities of the Labour Party'.

> ***'Kinnock has cut through the unfocused flailings which were policy before his leadership and boiled them down to a reformist charter. He is fighting this election on the concept of the enabling state'***

Kinnock's distance from Benn was not due simply to a wariness over the older man's style or the divisiveness he helped foster (though did not create): it rested more fundamentally on a calculation that Benn overestimated the resilience of a Labour Party beaten in the polls in 1979 and suffering from the fragmentation of its base, organised labour. Where most leftists unthinkingly assumed that their assaults on the positions of power and their denunciations of their 'comrades' on the right could result in the capture of an undamaged fortress Labour, Kinnock saw then the unreality of such a view. The future leader of the party saw its fabric being ripped: it was to stop that, in part, that he took the job.

'This is not a great job,' Kinnock told me once during an interview some two years ago. 'I have said [to senior colleagues in the party and the unions] I will do it but you'd better realise that means you support me.' One of Kinnock's strongest cards in his leadership, one which Michael Foot could not, or never thought of, playing, has been himself. Crudely, it was back me or sack me: he said it semi-publicly when he met the Parliamentary Labour Party after the Greenwich by-election three months ago.

It worked well. He has pulled to him such figures of the left as David Blunkett, leader of Sheffield Council and Tom Sawyer, deputy general secretary of the public employees' union, NUPE. He has helped marginalise the far left in Parliament, if not silence their constituency level activists outside. Indeed, it has been the noise generated in the press by the attacks on the far left — for much of his leadership, that meant Militant — which has obscured the tremendous changes he has wrought.

The 1983 manifesto is well remembered for being the longest suicide note in history. Since it was so long, few read it (though Conservative Central Office, famously, ordered 10,000 copies). Those who did, found a programme which would have committed a future Labour government to use the state so extensively and at the same time so sensitively as to create a Gosplan run by Marks and Spencer. At the same time, the powers given to the trade unions would have required these understaffed and under-resourced bodies to acquire such expertise in and authority over industry and services as to rival the largest stockbroker or merchant bank. It was a paper high watermark of left-wing corporatism at a time when the left was in retreat in the country and the state was being fragmented, apparently with popular consent. As it went one way, the country went the other.

The tide of ideas

Now, Kinnock has pushed through a manifesto which is short, shorn of most specifics and which is the embryo of a future relationship between state and capital, which could see the first acknowledging its limits and the second picking up its responsibilities. It also recognises, implicitly, the collapse in trade union authority and the unlikelihood of it recovering to the point where another attempt could or should be made to share power, as in the 1970s (indeed, so far and fast has Kinnock gone in this direction that he has

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City Syndication

Worlds apart: back me or sack me, says Kinnock, a card his hero-mentor, Michael Foot, could never play

offended a man who largely agrees with him, John Edmonds of the General and Municipal Workers. Edmonds has been placated by being placed in the campaign team). In short, Kinnock has turned Labour, officially at least, into a party committed to using selective state and corporate instruments geared to increasing efficiency and national wealth.

In doing so, he has broken with the dreams and rhetoric of his two hero-mentors, Aneurin Bevan and Michael Foot. John Campbell, whose recent biography of Bevan (see Campbell's essay in *NS* 3 April) saw the man as the last of the socialists, also dismissed all others, Foot and Kinnock included, as borrowers of his rhetoric to cloud their social democratic revisionism.

It is a vigorous argument, but it ignores Kinnock's achievement. He has of course preserved Bevan's memory and oratorical flourishes: but it is a little like that much-used picture of Margaret Thatcher sitting at the feet of the late Lord Stockton. Kinnock has cut through the gusty, unfocused flailings which were policy before his leadership and boiled them down to a reformist charter. At its briefest, it says that the state can do certain things to alleviate misery, and that it should get on with doing it. He is fighting this election on the concept of the enabling state.

He has not done it himself. The pro-market arguments which infuse the largely unreported parts of his speeches co-exist with an assumption that the market can be used, shaped and at times curbed in pursuit of both freedom and equality: themes which his deputy, Roy Hattersley and his campaign manager, Bryan Gould, have taken the time to explore more fully than he. Market socialism does owe much, of course, to the cauterising effects of Thatcherism on the ideas of state socialism, now largely disregarded: but it has its own tradition and prophets, and its exhumation in the past two or three years under Kinnock's leadership may yet be as significant to British politics as the much more hyped Friedmanite tide in the Tory party of the 1970s under Thatcher's aegis.

But here, too, was the largest rub. He has done all of this as the tide continued to flow against Labour, or at best, the waters were stagnant. When Nigel Lawson told the Scottish Tories last Thursday that 'no party has ever been defeated unless and until the tide of ideas has turned against it', he was voicing an arguable belief, but you saw what he meant. His sentiment might be better expressed like this: there are few if any examples of a British party winning power in the 20th century where it did not, in some important respects, take over parts of its predecessor's programmes and achievements. Roughly, Thatcher promised to 'do' monetarism better than Callaghan, Wilson promised to do corporatism better than Heath, Heath promised to trade union reform better than Wilson, Wilson promised to do modernisation better than Hume/Macmillan . . . and so on. Kinnock has helped manoeuvre his party into promising freedom better than Thatcher.

Rescuing the party

It *is* a much better vision. 'It isn't', he told the 1985 conference, 'the state doing things instead of people who could do them better, or replacing families or usurping enterprise or displacing initiative or smothering individualism . . . it is the state doing things that institutions — big corporate institutions, market institutions, rich, strong people — have not done and will not do with anything like the speed or anything like the scale that is needed to handle change with consent.' It's inclusive, reminding people of others, not content to allow a workless or skivvy minority rattle about powerlessly and self-destructively in society while others rush by, getting on.

But the very speed with which he has been forced to operate within the party and the fact that he has *had* to operate so much *within* the party to both rescue coherence from leftist shambles and fill a visionless void largely the responsibility (as figures like Hattersley will admit) of the right has meant that the vision's articulation has been too brief and muted, too overlaid with media concentration on feuding. He has scarcely been allowed the opportunity to expand as a national, let alone an international, figure.

This has been the largest reason for the pervasive commentary that he is incapable of doing so: 'A nice man, but . . .', as the Prime Minister put it with enormous condescension in interviews after announcing the election. Such commentary often comes from those who professed themselves enormously impressed by his courage and leadership qualities in 1985, when he and the party rode highest in the polls: and reflects an inability to believe that anyone, after eight years of Thatcher, could possibly replace her in her undoubted dominance of the political scene.

Well, others have dominated, and earned their place in history, and yet been removed from office by a people no longer willing to see them 'go on and on'. He is untested as Prime Minister: the same has been true of all prime ministers, and his dominance over his shadow cabinet colleagues and the Labour Party machine is more complete than any leader in opposition since the '60s. He can miss his mark at question time: so did Thatcher, in opposition. He has a short fuse: how would you react to a young tough who hit you on the head with a rolled-up newspaper? He has an evidently loving relationship with a wife who treats him as an equal: is *that* eccentric?

His achievement will stand whatever the result of the election. But a Kinnock premiership must be seen as possible, in two senses. First, in the obvious one, that a hung parliament (the best Labour can now hope to claw back from the decimation of 1983) would see him incontestably at the head of a Labour Party able to make deals with the Alliance. Second, in the sense that he could fit the role. He would have to learn fast, lean more heavily on others, delegate more rapidly. But the generosity of the vision he has adumbrated, and the needs of a fragmenting society, could sustain him and a reforming government. It *is* possible. □

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ECONOMICS

The rich get richer . . .

John Rentoul

THE BITTEREST charge to be made against Margaret Thatcher's government is that it has divided the nation by sharpening material inequality. In the eight years since the Conservatives came to power in 1979, the rich have become richer — much richer — the middle classes have done very nicely, and the number of those in poverty has doubled.

It's not so much a North-South divide, although that exists, like a scar from Grantham to Tewkesbury. The Two Nations live among one another, oblivious to and yet resentful of each other. Poverty is another country, which occupies the same territorial space, but whose citizens live by different rules.

Eight Labour councils in the South East this week launch a report on the 'South-South divide', drawing attention to poverty in yuppie streets and deprivation in the City of London's backyard. It shows that one in four of the registered unemployed live in the South East, and a third of all workers in the South East earn less than £115 a week.

They are trying to get the message across that the gap the Conservatives have opened up is not between 'the 87 per cent of us who are working' who have 'never had it so good' and the 13 per cent who are unemployed, illiterate and mostly in Liverpool, in Lord Young's complacent vocabulary. It is a stretching of differentials and social cohesion in every geographical area.

People with jobs are by no means the prospering model majority of Tory propaganda or official statistics. An official index, known as 'average earnings', has been rising steadily ahead of inflation since 1982, but it is an average which conceals wide differences — and which leaves out part-timers and the self-employed, the same low-paid categories which are behind the government's claims to have 'created jobs'.

The official New Earnings Survey shows that differentials between full-time employees have widened dramatically. The point which cuts off the highest-paid 10 per cent rose by a quarter in real terms between 1979 and 1987, while the point which cuts off the lowest-paid 10 per cent increased by little more than one-twentieth.

Earnings differentials

Annual pay	1979 (adjusted to 1987 money)	1987
10% earned more than	£13,170	£16,470
25% earned more than	£10,340	£12,420
50% earned more than	£8,070	£9,150
25% earned more than	£6,160	£6,700
10% earned more than	£4,920	£5,200

(Full-time adult men and women employees, gross earnings, GB only; 1987 projected.)

But income differentials have widened far more than these figures suggest, because the workforce covered by the New Earnings Survey has shrunk from 19 million to 16 million. So wider differentials are stretched across a smaller group of earners. But what happened to the missing 3 million full-time employees? That figure is accounted for by the rise in part-time employment, the small rise in self-employment, the rise in the number of married women not working, the expansion of job and training schemes — and the near tripling of registered unemployment.

In each case, people who would otherwise have featured in the above table have dropped out, almost exclusively onto lower incomes. This is confirmed by a separate set of much more reluctantly-produced official figures, those for people on what DHSS minister John Major calls 'modest incomes', meaning those on or near the level of Supplementary Benefit.

Last year, two days after the Royal Wedding which doubled Prince Andrew's civil list income to £50,000 a year, the government sneaked out the figures for *1983*. They were put in the House of Commons library just before the summer recess in the hope that no one would see them until the autumn, but Labour MP Frank Field had time to snatch a photocopy. *Using those three-year old figures, he was able to estimate that the number of people living on Supplementary Benefit, or on incomes equivalent to less than this supposed statutory minimum, had doubled from 6.1 million in 1979 to 11.9 million in 1986.*

> ***'The Conservatives have reduced or abolished all taxes on wealth, and the revival of the rich as an hereditary class is upon us. The wealth tax proposed in Labour's manifesto offers the electorate a clear moral statement: that the possession of wealth ought not to be separated from responsibility to society as a whole'***

So, not only are there more people in all parts of the country on the breadline, but those who are *not* on the breadline are selectively rising further and further above it, on the 'more you've got the more you get' principle. The low-paid may still be only just above the breadline, but the top 10 per cent are now out of sight.

This double-divisiveness is replicated throughout the Thatcher record. In housing, the 28 per cent of households who remain council tenants have been left behind in deteriorating stock, while homeowners have been tax-relieved and while rich homeowners in the South East are sitting on 40 per cent real capital gains. In education, comprehensives in poor urban areas have borne the brunt of cuts, good comprehensives have been bailed out by middle-class parents and 7 per cent of school children are out of it altogether in private schools.

'WHAT THE government has achieved is a massive shift of power to the owners of capital,' said chartered accountant Lord Bruce of Donington in the House of Lords last week. Until 1979, there was a long-term trend in this country towards a more equal distribution of wealth. That has been halted. It isn't likely to be reversed, because of the spread of 'passive wealth' in the form of houses and pensions to a little over half of the population. What will continue to happen is that increases in national wealth will go on accruing most unequally in proportion to existing wealth: the average individual in the richest 1 per cent of the population is 175 times richer than the average person in the poorer half of the population.

Neil Kinnock said last year:

> The possession of wealth is not in any sense offensive. The question is how people got it, and what are they going to do with it? Did they secure it by gross disadvantage being inflicted upon others? And are they putting it back in the form of new investment, are they regenerating the society, or are they shipping it abroad to tax havens?

But the possession of wealth *is* a problem, because it is the transmission of wealth within the same class which perpetuates inequality from one generation to another. It's all very well, as shadow trade minister John Smith proposes, to identify the 'deserving rich' as individuals who invest productively rather than buying Porsches. But the wealth tax proposed in Labour's manifesto now offers the electorate a clear choice.

A wealth tax has been Labour Party policy since 1972, although it never made it to the statute book. There are awful practical drawbacks to such a tax, as was demonstrated by the Irish experience 1975-78, when just 2,400 people paid the tax raising a miserable £5 million a year. But it is potentially a popular measure. A Gallup poll last year found 42 per cent supported a wealth tax, with 45 per cent against and 13 per cent undecided.

The main purpose of a wealth tax is as a moral statement: that the possession of wealth ought not to be separated from responsibility to society as a whole.

The Conservatives have reduced or abolished all taxes on wealth (as opposed to those on income or spending), and the revival of the rich as an hereditary class is upon us. A third Tory term would allow last year's abolition of tax on lifetime capital transfers to take effect, as increasing liquid wealth is inherited tax-free within a closed class.

Many large units of inherited wealth have survived the Welfare Revolution — the four decades since 1940 which were dominated by a consensus in favour of redistribution of resources from rich to poor. The Dukedom of Westminster, the Sainsburys and the Vesteys are examples. In this century, the rich largely withdrew from national and local politics and business leadership, but they retained control of many of the levers of power that mattered. Pension wealth and insurance funds are controlled, although they are not owned, by the same elite which directs Britain's finance sector. It's an elite which has become a little more open socially, but not much.

Now the *ancien regime* is back, and the removal of taxes on wealth, especially the transmission of wealth down the generations, is poised to re-create an hereditary plutocracy. Evelyn Waugh once complained that the Conservative Party had never turned the clock back, not even by five minutes. If only he could see them now. □

This article is based on John Rentoul's book, published this week: The Rich Get Richer: The growth of inequality in Britain in the 1980s, *Unwin Paperbacks, £4.95.*

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*OLIGOCHAETES, MAGNIFIED MANY TIMES.

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The saltmarshes around Britain's coast are the primary source of food for many of our shore birds and undersea life, including the fisheries, and it's important it stays that way.

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On it, organic matter produced by plants and algae forms the basis of a food chain leading through the humble Oligochaetes pictured above – tiny marine cousins of the earthworm – to the birds. At Esso, we're aware of this because the boundary of our refinery at Fawley includes saltmarsh along Southampton Water. And since 1970 biologists from the Field Studies Council have been monitoring its health for us.

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TACTICAL VOTING

How to unseat the member for Finchley

The latest guide to voting out the government — and increasing your knowledge and choice

TACTICAL VOTING has now taken its place in the lexicon of the election. But it is a wholly unknown factor: the two organisations presently proselytising for the tactic — the Centre for Electoral Choice and the higher-profile and more active TV 87 campaign — are recently formed, meagrely-funded and slenderly-staffed. If it works, it will be because the impetus to take the tactical vote seriously comes from below.

This past week has seen the publication of two lists to guide would-be tactical voters — one of which, from TV 87, we print opposite. This list limits itself to those Tory-held constituencies where a greater or smaller degree of tactical voting would unseat the MP: it is based, in part, on the results of the 1983 election campaign, updated by the May local election results in England and Wales (excluding London) and by considerable research on constituency quirks. Its explicit aim is to get the government out: it is a de facto, pre-election electoral pact between the opposition parties (Labour and Alliance activists co-operate amicably on its steering committee).

The Centre is quite different. Its list, contained within the 'Consumer's Guide to Tactical Voting', contains some 296 marginal seats, and it gives advice to people of all main parties, plus the nationalists, as to how to vote to defeat the sitting member, whichever party he or she represents. Indeed, the Centre has discovered that of these marginals the largest group — 94 — are vulnerable to tactical voting by *Conservative* supporters voting to unseat a Labour, Alliance or other member: a further 73 are vulnerable to Labour, 61 to the Alliance, 4 to the SNP and 1 to Plaid Cymru.

Choosing wisely

The philosophy underpinning the Centre's existence is summed up by its founder, Lord (Michael) Young, best known as the founder of the Consumers' Association and now its president: 'The situation facing voters is very like that which was facing consumers when I started *Which?* magazine. There were many many alternatives on the market and to choose wisely between them they need the best information they can get.'

Young's purpose, to provide the best possible information (and judgments — like TV 87, there are inevitably rough assumptions underlying the Centre's list, constructed by Dr Iain MacLean, Fellow in Politics at University College Oxford) is an excellent one, a logical extension of the mass of information provided both by real elections and by opinion polls devolved down to the local level where the elector can use it to inform his or her own choice. But both the Centre and TV 87 need local opinion polling in the period of the campaign itself to give their own projections up-to-date validity: and both have been active in proposing to local and provincial news media that they finance such polls. Already, a number have shown signs of being willing to do so: if that happens on a wide enough scale, there is a real reason to suppose that the tactic will make a difference to this election.

TV 87 is the more polemical and more controversial of the two groups: its purpose is to defeat the present government, and it has already drawn fire from Norman Tebbit, the Conservative Party chairman, and from other government figures. But it has also received a cool reception from the opposition parties, particularly Labour: Neil Kinnock has determined that the party line must be that only Labour can defeat the Tories — while the Alliance, seeking to maximise its vote, has been officially cautious about a tactic which may result in a drop in that vote.

At local level, many prospective candidates have objected strongly to the designation of their position — in TV 87's first list, published in the *NS* three weeks ago — as below that of the other opposition party. Many are convinced that the tide has sharply turned since 1983, or that the May local election results did not present a reasonable picture. To candidates and their supporters in that position, tactical voting is irksome to their efforts to improve their chances — but the adoption of such a tactic inevitably imposes such rough justice.

Though the following list is the best available now, the rankings of individual constituencies are likely to change as the campaign develops, especially where there is local opinion polling. TV 87 intends to issue updates in the following weeks.

In the balance

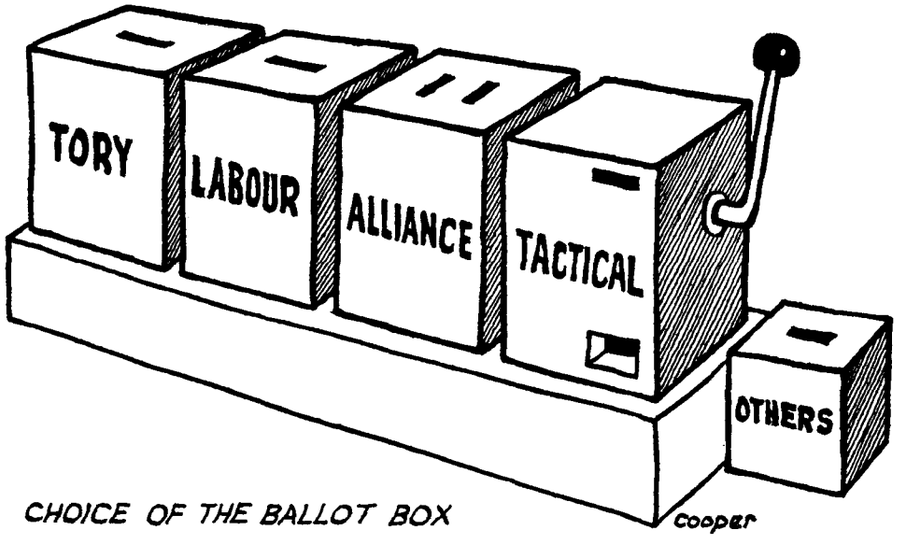
Scotland is something of a special case. There, a separate but linked organisation — the Campaign for a Tory-Free Scotland — has identified only 9 of the 21 Tory-held seats in Scotland as vulnerable to tactical voting at this stage. It believes, however, that it will be able to call the majority of these 21 seats by the last week of the campaign, and to give a positive recommendation on each — once System 3, the Scottish polling organisation, does a region-wide poll, and the main newspapers do some local constituency polling.

TV 87 has operated under a self-imposed constraint, which introduces a minor degree of artificiality into its list. That is, it has 'balanced' its proposed target seats between Labour and the Alliance. Within the total list of 182 on the next page, 78 show Labour in second place and 78 show the Alliance in second place — with a further 26 where a local poll is 'crucial'. Typically, however, Labour is a closer second in its target seats than the Alliance is in its seats.

However, TV 87 believes that the difference is minimal, and will anyway be compensated by the greater propensity of Labour voters to swing to the Alliance, where they perceive their own candidates to be trailing third, than would be true of Alliance supporters. The overriding merit of equal shares, in TV 87's eyes, is that it gives both Alliance and Labour supporters the same stake in tactical voting. TV 87 organisers up and down the country hope that some constituencies close to each other — like the two Norwich seats — might co-operate on 'swapping' votes where one has an Alliance candidate in second place and the other has a Labour candidate.

Finally, a word on the division in the list itself. The longer section, the 'key targets', includes most of the seats which the Alliance and Labour have already made it clear they wish to take, and which should be taken from the Conservatives with a degree of tactical voting. The smaller list, 'worth a good fight', means what it says — though changes in the positions of the parties, especially of the Tories, may make some of these fights easier during the campaign. Where, in both sections, TV 87 has noted that 'opinion polls are crucial', the two opposition parties are running neck and neck, and the latest information has now shown them pulling away from each other. Again, many seats so designated may change in the campaign.

It *is* wide open. TV 87 is so hopeful that it has included Finchley on its 'good fight' list, on the grounds, partly, that its member is unpopular. □



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The TV 87 index

	Labour	Alliance	Local poll crucial		Totals
Key targets	52	52	8	=	112
Worth a good fight	26	26	18	=	70

Constituency key targets	Recommendation
Amber Valley	Labour
Basildon	Labour
Bath	Alliance
Batley & Spen	Labour
Bedfordshire North	Alliance
Birmingham Northfield	Labour
Birmingham Yardley	Alliance
Bolton North-East	Labour
Bolton West	Local poll crucial
Bradford North	Labour
Brigg & Cleethorpes	Alliance
Bristol East	Labour
Bristol North-West	Labour
Bristol West	Alliance
Bury North	Labour
Bury South	Labour
Calder Valley	Alliance
Cambridge	Local poll crucial
Cannock & Burntwood	Labour
Carshalton & Wallington	Alliance
Chelmsford	Alliance
Cheltenham	Alliance
Congleton	Alliance
Corby	Labour
Cornwall North	Alliance
Crosby	Alliance
Croydon North-West	Local poll crucial
Darlington	Labour
Derby North	Labour
Derbyshire West	Alliance
Dewsbury	Labour
Dulwich	Labour
Eastleigh	Alliance
Edmonton	Labour
Ellesmere Port & Neston	Labour
Erith & Crayford	Local poll crucial
Exeter	Alliance
Falmouth & Camborne	Alliance
Feltham & Heston	Labour
Gainsborough & Horncastle	Alliance
Glanford & Scunthorpe	Labour
Gloucestershire West	Alliance
Halifax	Labour
Hampstead & Highgate	Labour
Harlow	Labour
Harrow East	Alliance
Hayes & Harlington	Labour
Hazel Grove	Alliance
Hendon South	Alliance
Hereford	Alliance
Hertfordshire North	Alliance
Hertfordshire West	Alliance
High Peak	Alliance
Hornsey & Wood Green	Labour
Hyndburn	Labour
Keighley	Labour
Kettering	Alliance
Kingswood	Labour
Langbaurgh	Labour
Leeds North-East	Alliance
Leeds North-West	Alliance
Leicester East	Labour
Leicester South	Labour
Lewisham East	Labour
Lewisham West	Labour
Lincoln	Labour
Littleborough & Saddleworth	Alliance
Maidstone	Alliance
Manchester Withington	Labour
Milton Keynes	Alliance
Mitcham & Morden	Labour
Newcastle Central	Labour
Norfolk North-West	Alliance
Norwich North	Labour
Norwich South	Local poll crucial
Nottingham East	Labour
Nottingham North	Labour
Nuneaton	Labour
Oxford East	Labour
Oxford W & Abingdon	Alliance
Pendle	Alliance
Penrith & Border	Alliance
Plymouth Drake	Alliance
Pudsey	Alliance
Putney	Labour
Richmond & Barnes	Alliance
St Albans	Alliance
St Ives	Alliance
Sheffield Hallam	Alliance
Sherwood	Labour
Shipley	Alliance
Shrewsbury & Atcham	Alliance
Slough	Labour
Southampton Itchen	Local poll crucial
Southampton Test	Local poll crucial
Southend West	Alliance
Southport	Alliance
Stafford	Alliance
Stevenage	Alliance
Stockport	Alliance
Swindon	Labour
Twickenham	Alliance
Tynemouth	Labour
Wallasey	Labour
Warrington South	Local poll crucial
Warwickshire North	Labour
Watford	Alliance
Westminster North	Labour
Wiltshire North	Alliance
Wrekin, The	Labour
Wyre Forest	Alliance
York	Labour

Worth a good fight . . .

Barrow & Furness	Labour
Basingstoke	Alliance
Billericay	Alliance
Birmingham Selly Oak	Labour
Birmingham Hall Green	Alliance
Blackpool North	Local poll crucial
Blackpool South	Local poll crucial
Braintree	Alliance
Brentford & Isleworth	Labour
Bridgwater	Alliance
Brighton Kemptown	Labour
Chester, City of	In the balance
Chorley	Labour
Colchester S & Maldon	Alliance
Coventry South-West	Labour
Crawley	Local poll crucial
Davyhulme	Local poll crucial
Derbyshire South	Local poll crucial
Dover	Labour
Dudley West	Labour
Ealing Acton	Local poll crucial
Ealing North	Labour
Elmet	Labour
Eltham	Labour
Erewash	Labour
Faversham	Alliance
Finchley	Labour
Gillingham	Alliance
Gravesham	Labour
Great Yarmouth	Local poll crucial
Harrow West	Alliance
Hastings & Rye	Alliance
Hendon North	Local poll crucial
Hexham	Alliance
Hornchurch	Local poll crucial
Ilford South	Labour
Kensington	Labour
Kingston-upon-Thames	Alliance
Lancashire West	Labour
Lancaster	Local poll crucial
Leics North-West	Labour
Lindsey East	Alliance
Luton North	Alliance
Luton South	Labour
Medway	Labour
Norfolk South	Alliance
Northampton North	Alliance
Nottingham South	Labour
Peterborough	Labour
Reading West	Alliance
Rossendale & Darwen	Labour
Rugby & Kenilworth	Local poll crucial
Salisbury	Alliance
South Ribble	Local poll crucial
Staffs South-East	Local poll crucial
Streatham	Labour
Stroud	Alliance
Suffolk South	Alliance
Surbiton	Alliance
Sutton and Cheam	Alliance
Taunton	Alliance
Wansdyke	Local poll crucial
Warwick & Leamington	Local poll crucial
Waveney	Labour
Wellingborough	Local poll crucial
Wells	Alliance
Welwyn Hatfield	Local poll crucial
Westbury	Alliance
Winchester	Alliance
Worcester	Labour

Scotland

Angus East	SNP
Banff	SNP
Cunninghame N.	Labour
Edinburgh Central	Labour
Edinburgh West	Alliance
Fife North-East	Alliance
Galloway	SNP
Kincardine	Alliance
Moray and Nairn	SNP

Wales

Bridgend	Labour
Cardiff Central	Alliance
Cardiff North	Alliance
Cardiff West	Labour
Clwyd North-West	Alliance
Clwyd South-West	Local poll crucial
Conwy	Alliance
Delyn	Alliance
Monmouth	Labour
Newport West	Labour
Pembroke	Labour
Vale of Glamorgan	Labour
Ynys Mon	Plaid Cymru

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5. Power play in Whitehall

The final episode of* Secret Society *explored how governments manipulate information to reinforce and retain power. The programme, which was formally cleared for transmission by former BBC Director-General Alasdair Milne in January, was originally to have been shown in April. But the whole series was then postponed and now, although the programme was legally re-cleared this month, the BBC says that the Corporation 'would not wish' on 'editorial' grounds to show the programme in a 'pre-election period'. This account, by presenter* DUNCAN CAMPBELL, *is based closely on the script approved for transmission by Alasdair Milne

THE VERY HEART of the British government is as secret as MI5 or MI6. The central policy making apparatus — the Cabinet Office — does not handle any paperwork that isn't secret at some level. Mrs Thatcher, no less than her Labour predecessors, has resolutely pulled the iron curtain around the real decision-taking organisms of government — Cabinet committees. The committees themselves are further hidden behind cryptic initials — only one of the committees, 'OD' (Overseas and Defence), has any official public existence. Beyond some fairly obvious other groups, like 'E' (Economic Policy), are a complex hierarchy of hidden subgroups as well as countless dozens of 'MISCs' (Miscellaneous) committees, whose numbers and titles give no apparent clue as to their function or agenda.

Before the last two general elections, the outgoing governments involved such committees in unusual tactics which, like details of the committees themselves, have no place in the textbook account of the British constitution. *Secret Society* examined, at equal lengths, some activities by the Labour and Conservative governments which faced re-election in 1979 and 1983. The first example was the remarkable story of how and why, for a mere ten hours, it was British government policy to legislate for Freedom of Information.

The 1974-1979 Labour government's election manifesto had promised Freedom of Information, and laws to 'place the burden on the public authorities to justify withholding information'. But Labour's prime ministers were less than keen to put that promise into practice. As a means of prevarication, James Callaghan set up a Cabinet committee called GEN 29, to look into offical secrecy, and head off demands for FoI.

But when Liberal MP Clement Freud came top of the autumn 1978 poll for private member's Bills, and chose FoI, Callaghan was suddenly put very uncomfortably on the spot. His government could not oppose a Bill which reflected their own manifesto promise. With Home Office support, the government resolutely tried to water it down and indeed to convert it into the strengthened Secrets Act that GEN29 really wanted. It was thus a fairly eviscerated Official Information Bill that Freud took out of Committee stage early in 1979.

> ***"The Coalition for Peace Through Security was financially supported by a foreign right-wing pressure group, the US Heritage Foundation, which offered to support the Coalition's attacks on the peace movement. One letter confirms that $10,000 was being provided. Another, dated October 1982, shows a further $50,000 allocated for "Anglo-American public education work on various timely themes of a non-political nature"***

One of Freud's most active supporters — the then Lewisham Labour MP Chris Price — tried to persuade Callaghan to offer the Liberals an unadulterated Freedom of Information Act in return for continued support during the 'winter of discontent'. Price told me that although 'Callaghan was very flexible in wanting to hold on to power, on Freedom of Information he had a 'very massive sticking point'.

A sudden crisis

A sudden crisis changed Callaghan's mind. On Wednesday 28 March 1979, Labour ministers faced an Opposition vote of confidence at 10 o'clock in the evening. The Liberal Party would be voting with the opposition, leaving Labour with no overall majority. Since Callaghan privately knew that one Labour MP was fatally ill and unable to attend, the government would, he knew, fall — in a minority of one.

In Downing Street, there were desperate political calculations. They knew that Clement Freud's Bill was just nine days away from its critical report stage. If Freud could just be persuaded not to vote, permitting Freedom of Information in the UK might no longer be too high a price to pay for power. So during the morning, Chris Price was contacted on Callaghan's behalf by government chief whip Michael Cocks. He was told that if he could save Callaghan's administration by getting Clement Freud to miss a train from Liverpool that night (where he was canvassing in support of David Alton) the government would have his Bill passed without further sabotage.

Price tracked down Freud in the Littlewoods Pools headquarters and told him that 'Number 10' had promised him his Bill — provided that he miss the train. Freud replied that he would think about the proposal, as Chris Price recalls:

> It was a great shock to him. I don't think he was as used to wheeling and dealing in government as some other MPs and politicians. I think the problem was that he was incredulous, he wasn't certain whether Labour would have delivered.

Freud's uncertainty made the evening exceedingly tense for the government and its supporters. Freud made no appearance in the chamber, and did not emerge from the Opposition lobby until the very end. So Price watched with mounting hope as Freud failed to appear, and then saw him — and knew that 'we've probably lost'. For Freud, the affair had indeed been a shock, finding Britain's immediate political future tempoarily resting in his hands alone. He told me how he felt:

> Manipulated . . . I felt a sort of moral indignation that I should be brought into this. Its really very odd that having covertly opposed my Bill as they did, they should then, for the doubtful advantage of governing for a few more months, which is all they had anyway, offer to do something which they said they wouldn't do.

CALLAGHAN DULY departed Downing Street, and Mrs Thatcher arrived. She showed less interest in Freedom of Information — and adapted the Cabinet system so that small ad hoc committees would deliver her desired results. It was the response to the decision of one such committee — MISC-7 (the 7th 'miscellaneous' committee under Mrs Thatcher) — to replace Polaris with Trident, followed soon by government permission to station US cruise missiles in Britain, that was to

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lead to a campaign every bit as desperate as Jim Callaghan's last ditch bid to hang on in power at Number 10.

The two decisions triggered public protests, and aroused grave Conservative fears about their re-election chances. What happened next inside Conservative Central office was recounted to *Secret Society* by a former Tory party official, Piers Wooley:

> At the time nuclear issues were regarded as quite a large problem as far as the election was concerned. The Conservative Party was worried that the momentum that CND and the Labour Party had gained so far was going to accelerate and that the disarmament issue would really fall out of their hands at the time of an election.

Private polls had told party managers how badly government popularity had slumped. So a co-ordinated campaign was to be planned against disarmament groups. Inside the government throughout 1982, there was no doubt that ministers felt desperately anxious to stop losing the public debate.

The actions which ministers and Conservative MPs then took include a remarkable catalogue of Whitehall improprieties. One of the groups who joined this campaign subsequently broke the law; government and foreign money was channeled into other groups; and the government is accused of more than once flouting constitutional rules about not involving civil servants in party politics.

One of the first moves was the formation of a special sub-committee led by junior defence minister Peter Blaker. As usual, the junior minister was backed up by a working party of civil servants, the 'Working Party on Nuclear Weapons and Public Opinion'.

Here, the government's civil defence programme was an early source of anxiety. The issue of official civil defence advice like the 'Protect and Survive' pamphlet in 1980 had been a disaster. People had become more worried, not less. Could the mistakes of 1980 — including a civil defence rehearsal which had shown the public the frightening prospect of how Britain might fare under nuclear attack — be avoided when another such exercise was to be held in 1982?

It proved beyond the sub-committee's power. The ministers asked civil servants to list the parliamentary constituencies in which each bomb would land. Then they decided that it would be unwise for bombs to land on marginal constituencies. These bombs should be moved, civil servants were told. But the exercise plans were now such a mess that it had to be cancelled by the Home Secretary, who blamed opposition from 'nuclear free zone' local authorities. There's never been a national civil defence exercise since.

Battle for hearts and minds

Other parts of the battle for hearts and minds had to take place both inside and outside the government. To co-ordinate a range of anti-CND groups, the Conservative Party set up a special committee of its own — the 'Committee for Peace with Freedom' — under backbench MP Winston Churchill.

'The Prime Minister's press secretary — a civil servant — was active in planning how the Tory party should ensure its re-election in 1983'

Winston Churchill's committee paralleled the special structure that Peter Blaker operated inside the government. The government in fact already funded one group, the British Atlantic Committee, which was explicitly regarded as a convenient 'government front organisation' according to former Defence Ministry Permanent Secretary Sir Frank Cooper. Former MoD senior official Clive Ponting recalled that inside the MoD 'it was a matter of trying to pick organisations were thought to be the most effective' as 'front organisations' with which to counter-attack against CND. BAC's Foreign Office grant was quickly trebled, to £58,000 — until the election was over.

But as a registered charity, BAC wasn't supposed to be running political campaigns. After receiving complaints, the Charity Commissioners investigated — and found that BAC had stepped over the permissible line for so-called 'educational' work. So BAC had to found a new non-charitable organisation called 'Peace through NATO', to use the extra government cash for anti-CND work.

Another, much more vociferous group was even less restrained in its campaigning methods against CND. The Coalition for Peace through Security was run by three Conservative parliamentary candidates and an American businessman. All the members of the Coalition, bar one, were Conservative Party activists, including Edward Leigh, now MP for Gainsborough, Tony Kerpel, now a government political adviser, and Julian Lewis, who continues to run right-wing activist groups. Piers Wooley recalled that their attendance at Churchill's meetings caused some disquiet:

> These were the street wise kids. They were mainly involved with heckling at public meetings, organising anti-CND rallies [and] finding any opportunity where they could have a direct attack at street level on CND.

The Coalition was financially supported by a foreign right-wing pressure group, the Heritage Foundation in Washington. Heritage offered at least $60,000 to support the Coalition's attacks on the peace movement, according to copies of correspondence obtained by *Secret Society*. One letter, dated February 1982, confirms that $10,000 was being provided to the Coalition for so-called 'charitable and educational purposes'. Another letter, dated October 1982, shows that just as the Conservative counter-attack on CND gathered speed, the Heritage Foundation allocated a further $50,000 for what was described as 'Anglo-American Public Education work on various timely themes of a non-political nature'.

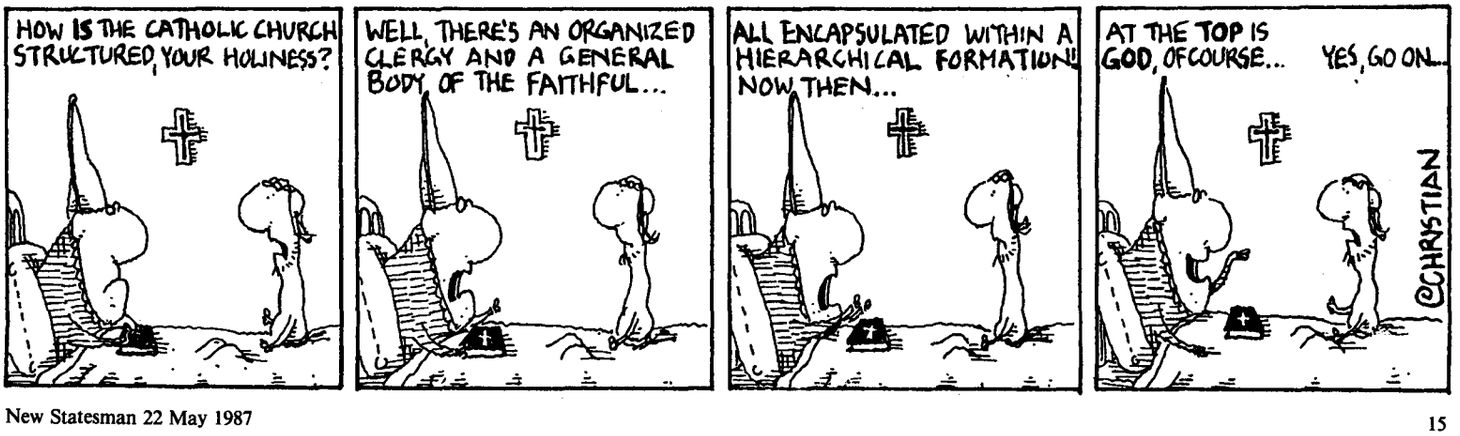
Last year, we asked a leading member of the Coalition, Dr Julian Lewis, to explain why he felt it important to take such an active stance against CND. First, he agreed to be interviewed. Then he changed his mind. Finally, he and Winston Churchill launched an intensive campaign to try to prevent the BBC showing the programme at all.

The anti-CND campaign intensified at the start of 1983, when Michael Heseltine was transferred to the Defence Ministry, and expected to make a vigorous attack on CND. He created a new department, DS19, which was officially supposed to provide public information about government nuclear policy. DS19 and Heseltine were also interested in private information about leading members of CND. M15 intelligence staff were asked to trawl their files for information the minister could use. Then, in a letter to Conservative Party candidates just before Easter, Heseltine circulated details of the background of leading CND officials.

The most serious criticisms of constitutional impropriety has been made about a special Liaison Committee which met from September 1982 onwards to prepare for the 1983 general election. The meetings took place in the Cabinet room of 10 Downing Street. But these were party political meetings, so its secretariat consisted of party officials, not civil servants.

Yet despite a firm civil service rule that civil servants have to keep their distance from party political matters, the Prime Minister's press secretary, Bernard Ingham, took an active role in planning how the Conservative Party should ensure its re-election in 1983, in attending the Liaison Committee.

To senior civil servants, such behaviour by Ingham was a gross and unacceptable breach of


HOW IS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH STRUCTURED, YOUR HOLINESS?
WELL, THERE'S AN ORGANIZED CLERGY AND A GENERAL BODY OF THE FAITHFUL...
ALL ENCAPSULATED WITHIN A HIERARCHICAL FORMATION! NOW THEN...
AT THE TOP IS GOD, OFCOURSE... YES, GO ON...
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propriety. Sir Frank Cooper gave me a clear account of the Whitehall view:

> I think it would be very unusual for any civil servant to attend a gathering of that nature which, by definition, must be a party political occasion . . . I think it would be fundamentally wrong for any civil servant to go to a purely political decision making gathering which is purely a party political occasion.

At one point in their defence discussions, the Liaison Committee studied an official Defence Ministry pamphlet, 'How to deal with a bully'. The pamphlet shows a British bulldog facing a vicious bear, a theme which had been devised by Peter Blaker and MoD public relations advisers. It was a remarkably aggressive pamphlet, Sir Frank Cooper recalled:

> It was a bit more extrovert than the stuff which normally comes out of government departments . . . Certainly that leaflet was viewed as sort of slightly way out, if that's the right phrase, within the Ministry of Defence.

Alarmed civil servants hoped that the idea would be abandoned by more experienced senior Ministers. But Defence Secretary John Nott had then suggested that the only change needed was to make the bulldog wear a Union Jack waistcoat! Piers Wooley recalled Mrs Thatcher's reaction to it at the Liaison Committee:

> The Prime Minister herself was very enthusiastic about it — even though she had slight problems about what colour the bear was. But apart from that little problem there was quite a lot of enthusiasm for the pamphlet.

Mrs Thatcher visibly demonstrated her enthusiasm by banging on the committee table, and repeating that 'we've got to use that bear'.

PERCEIVING THAT defence, once again, might be a major election issue, the propaganda machinery as cranked into action again. a new Conservative Party committee was formed ast autumn to campaign against Labour and Alliance defence policies. Just as before the 1983 election, the Ministry of Defence put together a new film on defence policy, which was launched in February.

John Ledlie, who used to run DS19 and is now the Defence Ministry Director of Public Relations, told me last year that the £200,000 half-hour film indeed would work to the political advantage of the Conservative Party. 'We'll try to steer a middle course, but it'll be difficult. it does give the rationale for defence and deterrence as practised under this administration'. It would be a view from one side only, he acknowledged:

> Oh, sure. Its not meant to be an objective view. Its putting the government case, its not the whole picture. its made on behalf of the government. You could say its using government funds for party purposes. But its distributed by the COI, not Conservative Central Office.

Like other parts of the secret government committees apparatus, the factors behind the decision to commit £200,000 of public funds to an avowedly 'one-sided' view of a political argument will remain officially secret for a minimum of 30 years — if they ever become accessible at all.

Now, in the forthcoming general election, politicians once again offer a commitment to openness. Once in power, it has always been a rather different story. □

MEDIA

Not the right feeling in the fingertips

Rainer Gatermann

The NS *has asked a group of experienced London-based foreign correspondents of differing views to comment on the election. The first of these is from the London correspondent of the West German daily,* Die Welt.

AFTER MRS Thatcher's decision to call a general election I got from my colleagues in Germany two questions: 'How do you explain the Tories' lead in the opinion polls?'; and 'What has happened to Neil Kinnock?'

Eighteen months ago, after Labour's 1985 party conference, I was strongly convinced that Neil Kinnock had got his party under control. The Militant Tendency was smashed and humiliated, black sections were not a serious issue, nobody talked — especially not in economic terms — about socialism. The party seemed to me to be united and had moved to the political centre, where the next general election had to be won. The fighting spirit was high.

Furthermore, I got word from Tony Benn that the left would not jeopardise Neil Kinnock's prospects to replace Mrs Thatcher in 10 Downing Street. Only after he had moved in, would the internal fight start . . .

Today the Labour Party has lost a lot of its momentum, despite the enthusiasm shown by its leader and despite some political programmes which should easily find the support of a majority of the electorate. Why the radical change? It can't be just the allegedly hostile attitude of Fleet Street. One reason might be, and here I have to quote my predecessor in London, that it is more or less impossible to bring the Labour Party under one hat. Another reason might be the inability of the leadership to attack the government in an effective style. The strong Tory position of today depends more on the weakness of the opposition than on the excellence of the government.

However, the main reason why the people are still sceptical towards Labour's policy is, from my point of view, the fact that they believe Neil Kinnock and his team are not able to succeed with all the changes necessary for Britain's economic recovery. All European industrialised countries had to go through painful changes when they moved away from heavy industries and old technology into the era of plastics, computers and minichips. But *they* started gradually in the mid-sixties while British governments, mainly Labour ones, didn't dare or were stopped by the unions from doing this.

Undoubtedly, the fact that the Prime Minister set Britain on the new course is up to now her most important achievement. The way she managed that is impressive and because of that she is respected and admired abroad, in West Germany probably more than in Britain. I have my doubts whether in 1979 Labour would have been able and willing to introduce these changes which were inevitable. Today, even Neil Kinnock has to recognise that only a Tory government and — most important — one led by a person with all the Thatcher attributes was in the position to force Britain into a new direction.

Hitherto, I had the view that Mrs Thatcher was not typically British. However, some weeks ago, after an intensive discussion with an experienced professor, I changed my mind and adopted largely his version. It is, especially for a foreigner, easy to classify Mrs Thatcher as unBritish; but she is an extremely good representative of her class: to be resolute, to be economical (sometimes even with the truth), to trust in your own capacity and ask your fellow citizens to do the same, only to ask state support in emergencies and to spend just the money you have earned and not live on credit.

Out of this description the Prime Minister's distant position towards the social and health services, and towards deprived parts of the community, is more explainable. It will be very interesting to see whether Labour will be successful in getting these issues into the centre of the election campaign. The same applies to the problems of older people, schools and housing. Compared with other West European countries, the conditions in these areas are appalling. And I think the government could have done more to solve these problems. I *do* miss what in German is called *Fingerspitzengefühl* (the right feeling in the fingertips).

The Prime Minister told us her ambition for her second term was to put the national economy right. She, her ministers and some companies have delivered impressive results. Anyhow, one has to take into account from what level this progress started: more or less from scratch. An international comparison shows that Britain is still far behind many of the other industrialised countries. Big Bang and today's profitable City can't cover up the weak position of manufacturing industry as well as the lack of investment in research and development. Obviously, there is no lack of capital. Why is it to be invested abroad? Is there perhaps a fundamental mistrust in the capability of British industry?

Writing for a foreign paper brings one inevitably to a dilemma: how to explain to your readers that in this country, the mother of all democracies, a party with 27.6 per cent of the votes, like Labour in the 1983 election, got 209 seats while another with 25.4 per cent, like the Alliance, has to be content with 23 seats? How does this correspond with the famous British sense of fair play?I really would enjoy seeing a hung parliament in Westminster and in a longer term a successful attempt by the Alliance for PR.

English friends told me that would be impossible, one couldn't change such a traditional (and they emphasise successful, while I have some doubts) system. However, Britain participated very actively in the creation of West Germany's parliamentary system. And most Germans believe it is more democratic than the Westminster model. I know at least one Englishman outside the Alliance who agrees: Ken Livingstone. □

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GENERAL ELECTION

Country in need of a purpose

ROB EDWARDS *reports on the dilemma for Scots voters*

SINCE THE failure of the 1979 referendum to bring devolution, Scottish politics has been characterised by a peculiar blend of despair, apathy and anger. The onslaught of unemployment, multiple factory closures and poverty have often crushed the spirit of resistance. The feeling of impotence under Thatcher's Westminster's rule has sometimes sapped the strength of opposition. Just occasionally, a group of workers — like the Caterpillar workers — has found heart for a fight. Even rarer, they have managed to win some minor concessions as a result.

Scotland, it seems, has long since forgotten its sense of purpose. It still retains its strong national identity, its pride and a kind of fragile self-respect. But no one has yet discovered how to transform its despair and apathy into anger and its anger into constructive action. Without inspired leadership from any quarter, the nation appears to have lost its way. The central task facing all the contenders in the coming election should be to help find it.

The Tories undoubtedly face the most daunting prospect. Last week's Conservative Party pre-election rally in Perth was of course carefully stage-managed ('Thank you for your spirited welcome' read the pre-printed copy of the Prime Minister's speech) and very precisely packaged for television. But in the midst of the circus, Mrs Thatcher looked like a curiously vulnerable human being, nervous, occasionally faltering and unsure of her touch. This was no doubt partly due to the absence of her much-beloved hi-tech teleprompter (it had broken down), but it was also symptomatic of her party's Scottish anxieties.

The Tories currently hold 21 of Scotland's 72 seats. If Scottish opinion polls and pundits are to be believed, they could lose up to a dozen of them. Hence Thatcher's warning to her party faithful in Perth of the dangers of complacency ('No one can take the Scots for granted', she hesitatingly ad-libbed) and the impassioned agreement of her threatened parliamentary colleagues ('Absolutely,' shouted Anna McCurley who lookd more than likely to lose Renfrew West). And hence, too, the offensive gaffs of no-hopers like Bernard Jenkin, the candidate for Glasgow Central and former cabinet minister Patrick Jenkin's son. He described the Gorbals in Glasgow as 'The Soweto of Scotland' and Labour's shadow Scottish Secretary Donald Dewar as 'Scotland's Botha'.

'A recipe for chaos'

Part of the Tories' vulnerability north of the Border is attributable to their increasingly aggressive opposition to proposals for a Scottish assembly. On a visit last month, party chairman Norman Tebbit suggested that the Caterpillar company had decided to close its Uddingston plant because of 'these crazy proposals for a Scottish assembly' which would lead to higher taxes. In Perth it was the Scottish Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, who led the attack.

Implicitly acknowledging the crucial importance of the issue for the Scottish electorate, he first argued that the Tories' record on devolution was one of which they could be proud. They had originally created the Scottish Office, they had made the parliamentary Scottish Grand Committee meet in Edinburgh and they had created the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. He then said that, although there may be a case for a federal Britain (a reference to his pro-devolutionist past), to graft a Scottish assembly onto a unitary British State would be 'a recipe for chaos'.

> ***'No one has yet discovered how to transform Scotland's despair and apathy. Without inspired leadership from any quarter, the nation appears to have lost its way. The central task facing all the contenders in the coming election should be to help find it'***

Like Tebbit, he forecast that an assembly with tax-raising powers would raise Scots taxes. A MORI opinion poll in the *Scotsman*, he claimed, showed that the proportion of Labour voters favouring an assembly dropped from 77 to 58 per cent when it was suggested to them that it might lead to increased taxes. He failed to point out, however, that the same poll showed that 51 per cent of Tory voters thought that an assembly which might increase taxes *would* be worthwhile.

The Tories are also worried about the much-publicised threat by the newly-formed Scottish Unionist Party (SUP) to put up candidates in nine Tory marginals in protest at the Anglo-Irish Agreement. SUP demonstrators brandishing Union Jacks lined up outside Perth city hall last week to yell 'traitors' at the well-groomed crowds queueing to hear Mrs Thatcher. Inside, their leaders met with Malcolm Rifkind and Scottish Tory Chairman, Lord Gould, to discuss ways of resolving the impasse over Northern Ireland. Both sides said afterwards that the prospect of Unionist election candidates had not been mentioned.

Whether the prospect will become reality is still far from clear. SUP leaders insist that their plans have not changed and will be announced next week. But some Unionist sympathisers point out that damaging the chances of a few prospective Conservative MPs in Scotland would not do their cause much good if the Tories were returned to Westminster with an overall majority. Some observers guess that the SUP threat is nothing more than a pressure group ploy. If so, it will be withdrawn at the last minute.

Glorious anarchy

In contrast to the cold calculation of the Tories in Perth, Labour's Scottish election launch last week was gloriously anarchic. Shadow Scottish secretary Donald Dewar MP and three Labour candidates looking like model consensoids (dark suit, light shirt, red tie) joined the purple-suited star of the tutti frutti TV series, Robbie Coltrane, in Edinburgh's Princes Street Gardens in the rain to let off some red balloons. The party's mood, as you would expect at a media event, was buoyant.

Behind the scenes, there is considerable confidence that Labour can substantially improve on its 1983 showing of 41 MPs. But this is coupled with a growing concern about the knock-on effect of a poor Labour performance in the South. Optimists suggest that this could be countered by skilfully presenting the strength of Labour's position in Scotland as a base from which key parts of England can be conquered. Pessimists mutter behind hands about the inevitability of the Doomsday scenario (a third Thatcher victory in England) and the need for suitable contingency plans to force the establishment of a Scottish assembly (see *NS* 20 March).

The Alliance has eight seats in Scotland to its name. If it fights a good campaign, it has realistic hopes of winning a handful more, mostly in rural areas at the expense of the Tories. But it will have to improve its curent showing in the opinion polls. The latest two MORI polls for Scotland put the Alliance percentage of the vote at between 18 and 20 per cent, several points below their performance in the UK as a whole. This means that there may be a couple of Alliance seats that are vulnerable, including that of the SDP's Roy Jenkins in Glasgow Hillhead (majority: 1,164).

The Scottish National Party (SNP), with just two existing MPs, is perhaps the biggest joker in the pack. The most recent opinion polls are suggesting a slight lift-off of support (17 per cent of the vote, according to one, compared to 12 per cent at the last election). Party representatives are speaking as if they are already in orbit, aiming to win some 16 seats, eight from the Tories and eight from Labour. While gains of such a magnitude are highly unlikely, there is no doubt that the SNP has the potential — if people accept its invitation to 'play the Scottish card' — to inflict serious harm on both parties.

There are two Scottish constituencies where it is always wise to make no predictions. In the Western Isles, the veteran SNP MP Donald Stewart is retiring and none of the contenders can be certain of inheriting his mantle. In Orkney and Shetland, currently held by Liberal MP Jim Wallace (majority: 4,150), the SNP has agreed to stand down in favour of John Goodlad, an Orkney and Shetland Movement candidate committed to political autonomy for the islands. In the unlikely event of his winning — and Thatcher getting her dreaded third term — perhaps we all would do best to go and join him. □

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Europe dithers: disarmament withers?

Mrs Thatcher's acceptance last week of the Soviet concessions on Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces is a desperate holding measure until after the election. **JEREMY LEGGETT** ***reports***

AFTER A MONTH of being non-committal in the face of public reluctance in Bonn and Paris, the Foreign Office was finally authorised to say last week that the British government would accept Gorbachev's 'double zero option' to eliminate two whole classes of weapons from Europe.

Mrs Thatcher's apparent eve-of-election *coup* in pulling the rug from under the feet of the Labour Party, does not, however, stand up to closer scrutiny. The choice which ultimately faces her, and which she will try to hide until after the election, is to go all the way down the zero option road and scrap Trident, or go arm-in-arm with Chancellor Kohl and end up having to justify deploying *more* nuclear missiles in Britain.

Mikhail Gorbachev's offer on 14 April was to destroy about 1,500 Soviet warheads in return for the destruction of 388 NATO warheads. The 'double zero option' would ban all land-based longer-range Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) and land-based shorter-range INF from Europe. The main condition to his proposal was that no new deployments would take place in either category. (It is very important to emphasise at the outset that the INF warheads currently on offer are of the *land-based* variety only: see chart opposite.)

The German and French governments, together with senior NATO officers such as the Supreme Allied Commander, General Bernard Rogers, instantly went public with fears about the wisdom of abandoning land-based INF in Europe.

The support Mrs Thatcher now proffers has an unresolved proviso: that Germany be allowed to keep its Pershing 1A missiles. *Those missiles are in fact the only land-based short-range INF which NATO possesses.* The Soviet Union agrees that the Pershing 1A missiles belong to West Germany, and agrees Germany can keep them. But in a critical element of the draft treaty tabled in Geneva on 27 April, the Kremlin insists that *the nuclear warheads on them belong to the United States, and that those 72 warheads must go if the Soviets are to abandon all their short-range INF* (168 plus many SS23s yet to be deployed).

Where does Mrs Thatcher stand, then, on the Pershing 1A *warheads*, as opposed to the missiles which carry them? The Foreign Office is not saying. Their defence is easy: the talks, after all, are bilateral and do not involve us directly.

These critical semantics were overlooked by almost all the media reports on the day following Mrs Thatcher's pronouncement of 'support'. The electorate was sold an image of Mrs Thatcher wholeheartedly embracing the Soviet concessions; an image muddied only by George Younger's immediate insistence that other forms of INF (air- or sea-based) might have to plug the 'gap' left by the land-based INF.

The Americans are more categorical on where they stand on short-range INF. The Pershing 1As, *including their warheads*, belong to the Germans. The Soviets, they say, must set aside (third party) considerations. At the time of writing, then, the only way the Soviets will be able to trade in all their ground-based short-range INF for a double-zero deal is if the Germans *independently* abandon their Pershing 1As. And as Chancellor Kohl has made clear, there is little — or no — chance of the divided Bonn coalition doing that.

Election postures

During the election campaign Mrs Thatcher will seek to present the Soviet concessions on INF as a triumph for the 'position-of-strength' approach to arms control. For many voters this notion seems to have a visceral credibility.

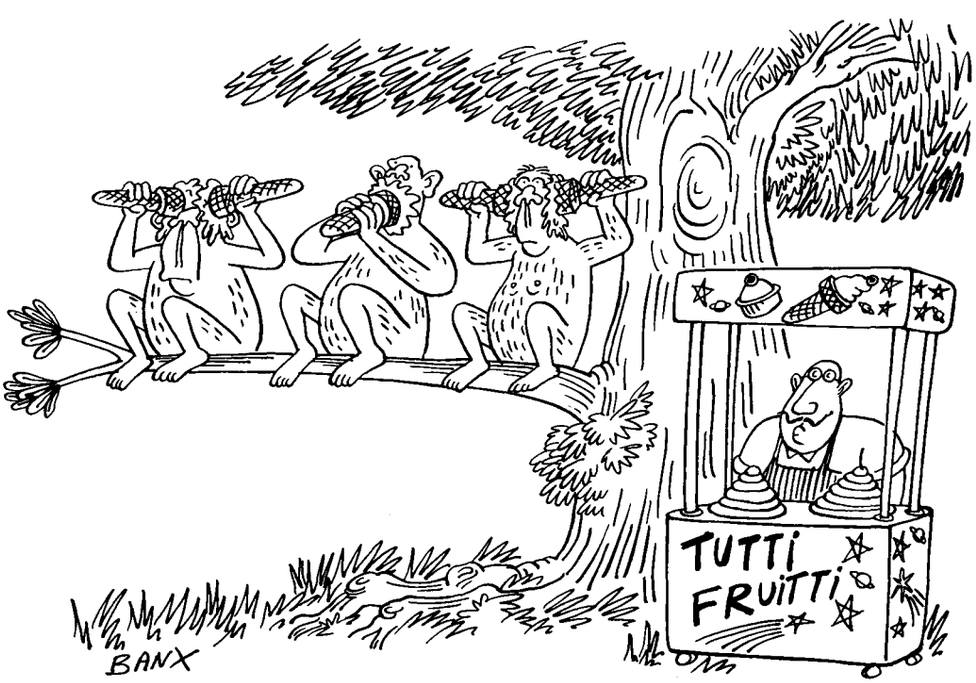
Yet George Younger, echoing the feeling of last week's NATO Nuclear Planning Group meeting in Stavanger, has already raised the possibility of simply replacing ground-launched cruise missiles with sea-launched cruise aboard new US submarines based at Holy Loch. Or even with air-launched cruise aboard American B-52s based in Britain. This should assist the Labour and Alliance parties in presenting the case that Mrs Thatcher's government is reluctant to face up to a world of shrinking nuclear stockpiles.

For Mrs Thatcher is potentially vulnerable on the issue of disarmament. At the root of her quandary is the wisdom — questioned even in her own ranks — of increasing Britain's nuclear strike-power eightfold, through Trident, when there is a chance of real progress at last in Geneva.

Her intransigence on Trident stands particularly exposed now that President Reagan has presented the Soviets with a draft treaty on follow-on deep-cuts in strategic weaponry. Pressing ahead with the acquisition of Trident in that climate smacks of the 'nucleophila' which the Kremlin accused her of during her Moscow visit. This is why she has delayed a month before offering veiled 'support' to the double-zero option, and why the Conservatives have chosen to go open so early on the question of the 'INF gap'.

Inflexible response

What now worries NATO hawks is the credibility of their 'flexible response' deterrence doctrine — in simple language, their threatened first-use of nuclear weapons — in a Europe devoid of land-based INF. The capacity to inflict nuclear strikes within Warsaw Pact countries, so the logic goes, is necessary both to deter initial invasion and —



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The nuclear balance

(NATO — including French — and Warsaw pact nuclear warheads)

WARSAW PACT

SOVIET UNION

	Land	Sea	Air	TOTAL
Short-range (SR) (0-500km)	6,145	1,576	3,950	11,671
Shorter-range intermediate (SRI) (500-925km)	168	208	2,290	2,666
Longer-range intermediate (LRI) (925-5,500km)	1,435	18	250	1,703
Strategic (5,500km+)	6,420	3,216	1,080	10,716
			Grand Total	**26,756**

UNITED STATES

	Land	Sea	Air	TOTAL
Short-range (SR) (0-500km)	6,395	899	—	7,294
Shorter-range intermediate (SRI) (500-925km)	72	1,145	288	1,505
Longer-range intermediate (LRI) (925-5,500km)	316	1,045	3,736	5,097
Strategic (5,500km+)	2,110	6,656	4,080	12,846
			Grand Total	**26,742**

UNITED KINGDOM +

All missiles	None	30 SRI 128 strategic	85 SR 35 SRI 400 LRI	
			Grand Total	**678**

FRANCE +

All missiles	120 SR 18 LRI	176 strategic	121 SRI 50 LRI	
			Grand Total	**485**

What the chart shows:

- Rough US/Soviet parity in total number of warheads.
- The US/Soviet share of the global warhead inventory is over 97 per cent. The UK share is just over 1 per cent. (N.B. China has about 300 strategic and LRINF warheads, and an unknown number of SRINF and SNF).
- The US concentrates its strategic force in submarines. The USSR concentrates its strategic forces on land.
- The 'double-zero' option (land-based SRINF and land-based LRINF) involves just over 3 per cent of the global warhead total: the USSR has about 1,500 warheads on the table in Geneva, the USA has less than 400.
- The USA outnumbers the USSR in the varieties of INF (air- and sea-based) not on the table in Geneva.
- The USSR has overall dominance in the SNF category.
- The USA dominates in nuclear anti-submarine warheads.

Notes

1. The divisions between the range of missiles are not absolute: many of these missiles can be and would be used at shorter ranges than those indicated. And it's important to note, too, that the numbers above are *warheads*.

2. Remember the 'McNamara Criterion'. When he was US Secretary of Defense 20 years ago, Robert McNamara calculated that just 200 of the larger strategic warheads targeted on urban areas would result in the 'assured destruction' of the Soviet Union or the United States as modern societies. Some say he was an optimist: 20 would have had that effect.

Chart compiled by Jeremy Leggett from figures issued by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Stockholm Peace Foundation, The Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and the Center for Defense Information.

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should deterrence fail — to hit reinforcements, airfields, and so on, behind the lines.

Land-based INF forces — particularly short-range ones — are considered by NATO planners to be vital to this concept. Opponents of the INF deal mutter darkly of an absence of INF forces leaving Europe nakedly exposed to the threat of conventional and chemical attack, thereby lowering the nuclear threshold (that is, causing us to resort to strategic weapons earlier on).

That we are dangerously exposed by the conventional imbalance is a contention which — every year — the *Military Balance* published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies challenges. Furthermore, the INF category of nuclear weapons includes *existing* air- and sea-based systems, in which area NATO enjoys a clear numerical — and technological — advantage (see chart).

Advocates of disarmament thus argue that the 'INF gap' is a fiction created by politicians intent on keeping forward-based US missiles on the continent. The hawks insist they are necessary in order to ensure the US will, if asked, leap to our defence without reservation and with the option of going nuclear. In the jargon of arms-control, such thinkers seek to preserve nuclear 'linkage' between the US and Europe.

To analyse Mrs Thatcher's true attitude to the INF deal requires a close look at the run-up to the tabling of the double-zero option.

Moving goalposts

The history of the INF negotiations has been an uncomfortable one at every turn for Europe. It is clear now that when President Reagan first suggested his 'zero option' in 1981 many senior figures in NATO kept quiet in the belief that the Soviets would never accept it. At first, under Brezhnev, they didn't. NATO's terms then were to scrap ground-launched cruise missiles and Pershing 2 in return for the dismantling of the SS20s, *with a freeze on shorter-range INF deployments* (an important condition in view of subsequent events).

Ground-launched Cruise and Pershing 2 deployments went ahead in 1983. The Soviets walked out of the INF talks, which did not resume until 1985. The most significant events thereafter were as follows:

● **January 1986: Gorbachev floated his package of proposals to eliminate all nuclear weapons by the year 2,000.** It included removal of all longer-range land-based INF in Europe — an effective endorsement of the 'zero-option' — as a first step, conditional on the UK and France freezing their weaponry. No, said France (January) and Britain (March): we must be free to 'modernise' (acquire more destructive weapons) if we wish.

● **September 1986: Soviet concession number 1.** The INF deal could be independent of British and French considerations.

● **October 1986: Reykjavik.** Reagan and Gorbachev agreed to abandon land-based long-range INF in Europe, keep 100 of them each in the US and eastern Soviet Union, and *negotiate later* on shorter-range INF. At the last fence in Reykjavik came the crucial fall-out over Star Wars, and after the mini-summit Gorbachev made it clear that his stance on INF was part of a package contingent on American abandonment of Star Wars testing.

● **28 February 1987: Soviet concession number 2.** INF talks could be 'decoupled' from pre-conditions on Star Wars. NATO Supreme Allied Commander General Rogers instantly came out in opposition to the deal which his own side had first proposed. Mrs Thatcher followed, saying in the Commons that a deal on long-range INF must be contingent on negotiations *at the same time* on short-range (Both in the 'zero option' and at Reykjavik Reagan had agreed *later* negotiations on short-range INF.)

In March Mrs Thatcher seemed to be also insisting on linking talks on conventional and chemical weapons as a pre-condition for a deal, though she later drew back from this position. In Germany, a split developed between Foreign Minister Genscher and hawks in the coalition over whether the offer should be accepted. In the French government there was talk of the deal representing a 'Munich'. European fears at this stage focused on the numerical superiority which the Warsaw Pact would have in short-range INF if long-range were abandoned.

● **April 1987: Soviet concession number 3.** Gorbachev, while in Prague, proposed immediate parallel negotiations on short-range INF. Exasperated Western correspondents in Moscow wondered what the consequences would be on the new and enlightened Soviet leadership of seemingly wrecking tactics by the West.

● **14 April: Soviet concession number 4.** Gorbachev volunteered to George Shultz when he visited Moscow that the Soviet Union would eliminate *all* land-based short-range INF as part of an INF deal.

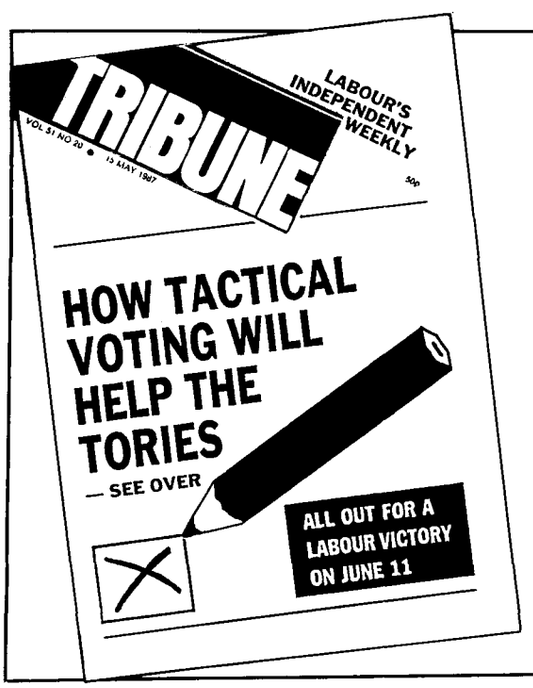
The 'fears' in Europe have now merely shifted in emphasis. The concern this time — not that the Soviet Union has more weapons, but that NATO needs short-range INF to continue its policy of threatening to fight a 'limited' nuclear war — at least has the benefit of being honest.

Mrs Thatcher shares these fears. When she visited Moscow she declined to outline specific western short-range INF proposals beyond a freeze, and said any agreement must involve the 'right to match' short-range INF. A Thatcher aide, asked about a zero option on SRINF by the *Boston Globe*, was quoted as saying: 'We would have to say no. We are not going to be driven down the route to the denuclearisation of Europe — and that means the maintenance of shorter-range forces and not just our own deterrent.'

As the haggling goes on in Europe — and particularly in Bonn — two options other than 'double zero' are being floated. The first involves modification of Pershing 2s, which are long-range, to Pershing 1BS, which are short-range. Of course, they can soon be modified back: so this is hardly a thought calculated to appeal to the Russians.

The second involves *actually building up NATO short-range INF* to something like Soviet levels. George Shultz has warned NATO members that if they fail to agree a total ban on short-range INF they must accept deployment of the necessary extra missiles. The Kohl government has made it clear that if this happens, Britain must share the burden with Germany.

So Mrs Thatcher is wrestling with a potentially enormous problem, which she will seek to hide until after the election. If she gives wholehearted, *to the letter*, support to Gorbachev's 'double zero' option, she sets the scene for an INF treaty and possible follow-on strategic cuts. That would comprehensively undermine Trident. If she comes out too openly for 'plugging the INF gap', she will have to sell the deployment of American cruise missile-armed submarines and bombers, not to mention new short-range INF missiles (which would not even be capable of reaching the Soviet Union). She would have conspired in so doing to make any land-based INF treaty negotiated in Geneva a meaningless fiasco. In the face of the disarming moves from the Kremlin, she would risk awakening mass dissent. We can expect obfuscation during the campaign. □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Shooting in self-defence

Family snapshots, studio portraits, the work of high-street photographers: such images, argues LIZ HERON, grow in importance as the times become ever less certain

SKY a permanent sunken grey filled the view from the Salford campus at last month's National Photography Conference. Oddly, there was little more to look at inside. Only two exhibitions occupied the viewing space: a vast set of panels brought from Northern Ireland and the Birmingham 'Building Sights' project on how the meanings and experience of old age differ ethnically.

Both exemplified 'community photography': the one a testament to communities under prolonged siege; the other documenting cultural diversity and communality at one of the two poles of age where it can most easily be shared. The conference could have done with even more examples of what community photography means in practice. Hard enough to pin down in its funded heyday, the 1970s, it still defies definition.

Yet, in practice, its meanings have been re-assessed. Geography doesn't always match community of interest and locally-based projects have perceived this fact of distinct audiences and groupings. If the debate over popular access to photography has sometimes foundered on patronising confusions about what 'the people' might do with the cameras and darkrooms put at their disposal, there's plenty of evidence that these resources are far from being wasted.

The 1970s not only renewed the documentary tradition through which the camera would expose social injustice, but saw radical photographers setting out to create an alternative repertoire of positive public images, drawing on a consciousness of identities shared through oppression or disenfranchisement: as women, blacks, gays, unemployed, disabled people or tenants dispossessed to make way for somebody else's luxury housing. But, as funding dwindled and committed photojournalism watched its media outlets move into the fast lane of the consumer spectacle, documentary photography itself went through a crisis of confidence. Its gravest aspect was described by *Ten.8* magazine early in 1982: '... the development of increasingly sophisticated theoretical debates has thrown into question notions of *truth* and *objectivity* which were often unquestioningly associated with documentary photographs.'

Semiological analyses of how the photograph's meanings are constructed by lighting, lenses or perspective, altered by captions and context, have certainly complicated primary issues of power and representation — who's holding the camera, and on behalf of whom? Photography's uses and meanings are potentially elastic; both *Ten.8* and the now defunct *Camerawork* stretched the terms of debate accordingly, across a multi-disciplinary field. If this produced some disconsolatory insights into the futility of seeing the photographic image as a sure repository of truth within the Postmodern image maelstrom, it also stirs other possibilities.

Edward and May Bond pictured outside their home. Their mother sent this postcard to their older brother, Willie, while he was away during the First World War. She wrote the following message: 'Dear Willie, do you know these two little children but do not take too much notice of how they are taken for they look a bit untidy but I did not know they were having their likeness taken but I thought I would bye one to let you have a look at there dear little faces for they are always talking about there Willie he will be pleased to see how big they have got. Bye bye love.' (From Manchester Studies' *Family Album*)

We are living in hard times and the climate of reaction has eroded a sense of public life; fellow-feeling, mutuality have less and less social legitimation; words like collectivity and solidarity wear thin and become vulnerable to rhetorical divisions. This is what happened at the Salford conference, which — though a landmark for independent photography as the first national event of its kind — was riven by bitter disagreement. The issue was that of space for the priorities of black photographers. Sadly, it was keynote speaker Jo Spence, invited as a mark of recognition, who bore the brunt of the frustrations. Partly this was the fault of a programme that failed to address the agenda of the 1980s and to respond adequately to the recent Arts Council/Minority Arts Advisory Service report on black photography. The document, with its strong critique of racism within photographic institutions, hadn't been widely circulated from Piccadilly.

But the divisions were also symptomatic of the times, of attenuated social bonds between different groups in a world where our fates seem controlled by increasingly remote processes and systems. But, if radical intervention in the public arena has been swamped by a global flow of images and information, daily speeded up and manipulated by new technologies, there are still submerged kinds of knowledge that develop in response to local, private experience, rather than to representations of the world out there.

Photographs in the private sphere have a different currency than in the public. Not only are their meanings more personal, more local, less about instant communication than about association and remembrance, but, for these very reasons, they have a different relation to time. The news photograph is judged by its capacity to invest an arrested moment with the significance of narrative — to tell a story that encapsulates an event. The album snapshot or the studio portrait is already located in the past. Its meaning as 'event' may be non-existent, but this very insignificance can be a source of possible stories whose outcomes suffuse the present.

Its details and textures, especially if unfamiliar and puzzling, prompt curiosity, turning us into naive viewers, casual detectives. The haziness of its visual language can jolt our reliance on the ready-made grammar of actuality which leads us to take so many of the contemporary photograph's meanings for granted. The news photograph acquires similar qualities at a distance of years, when the cut of a coat or the set of an unknown face intrigues and induces reverie. It becomes history, in the sense not of great events, but of life lived by ordinary people.

THE TIMES we live in have sharpened our sense of history. Imminent loss — of a way of life, a landscape, a hope for the future — always heightens awareness and, with revised outlooks, we reassess the here and now in the most personal ways. This makes us look back, so that the past converges on the present, urgently, where in better days it might have hovered remotely at our backs. The desire not for time frozen in a single 'meaningful' photographic moment, but accorded the potential of everyday narrative continuity, of lives expanding outside the photograph's frame, fits the need for the 'Records of exploration, handed down to the forgetful./Great behaviour, observed by no one' of Brecht's *Bad Times*.

This partly explains why such a strong sense of history informs some of the most important photographic work happening today. Not history as the drama of public events, but as autobiography or social history. Jo Spence's work on the family album has shown its potential as psychic autobiography, as a means of

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reconstructing and exploring the past as an archaeology of the present, through visual gaps and absences as well as partially inscribed memories. Her approach is complemented by others that look at the social through the personal, though in very different ways. There is a new valuing of the archive, spreading out from private images to a local topography of everyday life.

Millions of us have a random access to the visual traces of the past through private photographs. Do they have a collective value that can aid the social historian's search for pattern through detail; and how does their particularity match the knowledge vouchsafed by photographs whose 'documentary' status is more corroborated?

Stuart Hall, writing on photojournalistic representations of Afro-Caribbean immigrants to Britain in the 1950s and early 1960s, has noted that formal studio portraits too were 'in their own ways, "documentary". They document where people were, at a certain stage of life, and how they imagined themselves, how they became "persons".' These were tokens of arrival, of having found a social place.

Archives everywhere

In the late 1970s, historians Audrey Linkman and Caroline Warhurst sought out family photographs in specific districts of Manchester, as part of the Polytechnic-based Manchester Studies project. Their archive now has over 60,000 family photographs dating from the 1860s onwards. Alert to the problems of using the photographs as innocent historical evidence, they aimed to understand their contemporary context and the overlay of photographic conventions. They gathered background information from each donor, building a written catalogue of family detail into the archive, illuminating the significance of different photographic traditions in working-class life — predominantly the portrait, until camera ownership became widespread in the late 1930s. Its importance in what Audrey Linkman calls 'underwriting respectability' is sometimes bizarrely highlighted by the introduction of such conventional accoutrements as the aspidistra into the street groups photographed by speculative portraitists who touted for business among those too poor to pay a studio fee.

The Archive has organised exhibitions on different aspects of Manchester life at the turn of the century, as well as the major 'Family Albums' and 'The Classic Slum' (using text from Robert Roberts' eponymous autobiography of growing up in Salford). It also showed the older archive material next to more recent photographs, like Shirley Baker's 1960s pictures of slum clearance and redevelopment. In 1984 it took on a new identity, the Documentary Photographic Archive, and a commitment to building a contemporary archive on aspects of daily life, using working photographers. They commissioned Martin Parr on the theme 'Shopping' and two other proposals are underway: Clement Cooper on the black community in Moss Side, and Marianne Morris on work, home and leisure for five teenagers from different backgrounds.

Where these differ from the traditional photo-essay is in requiring as much self-effacement as self-expression on the part of the photographers, who are expected to keep a diary and to be systematic even if what they photograph wouldn't otherwise merit notice or printing up. They are asked to note what they *weren't* able to photograph because of barred access or institutional refusals — inside a Job Centre in one case. Historians of the future will have the photographs *and* some insights into the circumstances of their making.

Martin Parr's 40-picture exhibition was only a fraction of what was deposited in the archive — over 1,500 negatives. Interestingly, he asked for agreement that future photographs needn't carry his name should they fail to do more than make 'a simple record of the subject'. This systematic approach, on a commission to order, clearly has more in common with the high-street photographer than with the traditions of journalistic reportage or of the social landscapist on the alert for aesthetic epiphanies. It refuses to privilege particular moments of personal vision in favour of an attempt at the encyclopaedic.

There are echoes here of Mass Observation and of the New Deal's Farm Security Administration project, which Audrey Linkman took as something of an inspiration after having visited its Washington archive. But there are crucial differences too. The FSA project, which has furnished history with its icons of the US Depression, institutionalised an emerging documentary realism in the service of Roosevelt's relief and aid programme to rural areas. Tightly orchestrated in terms of the kinds of images required, highly selective about what was made public and edited even to the point of negatives made useless, it constitutes an officially authorised document of American history in a moment of crisis and reform.

How the social is made visible, to what end and under whose control, affect the way we make sense of the past and present. The revived support for the photography of everyday record and its preservation derives from a less constricted belief in the 'truth' of documentary than did its antecedents of the 1930s. Its picturing, in many different hands, isn't regulated by outside authority. And quite contrary to any attempt at imposing pre-given meaning on the visual — knowing what you want the camera to say in advance — it seems to search for it in the seams that join past and present.

The DPA has served as a model for other archives, like the one in Sheffield's Social Studies Library and the Exeter Visual Survey, carried out last year with an MSC-financed group coordinated by photographer Steve Hobson. The Consett Archive grew from a different impulse. It was the closure of the town's steelworks and the resulting unemployment that led to its establishment in 1982, with some funding from Northern Arts. Its 10,500 photographs — which, like those in the DPA, are copies from originals returned to their donors — span the near century from the 1890s onwards.

Martin Herron is one of the three unemployed workers who take photographs and run the archive, whose scarce funding makes it reliant on a voluntary network. He describes it as 'not only a record of Consett's past, but a chronicle of what's happening now'. Consett has organised three exhibitions, shown in local pubs and clubs, and only leaving the area to tour the coalfields during the miners' strike.

'Archives are thriving in the North East. We get more and more letters from people asking for advice about setting them up, particularly from other places changing through deindustrialisation, like Glasgow,' Martin Herron told me. He sees this as a sign of the need to keep a record of changes as they are taking place in a community and on the face of a landscape that had stayed the same for decades. He believes that photography is being adopted as a tool working-class people can use to document what is happening to their lives, rather than relying on outsiders.

The recent publication of the award-winning book *Scotswood Road* (reviewed *NS* 10 April) is suggestive testimony to the existence of unknown photographers of record within the working class. It's also another sign of the growing interest in such photography. These beautifully resonant photographs of Jimmy Forsyth's own neighbourhood on the brink of change in the 1950s and early 1960s were made with an underlying purpose that it has taken several decades to fulfil.

There are photo-archives all over the country, a few actively sustained over the years, but many languishing in libraries that lack the necessary staff. This is changing. Salford's new Viewpoint Gallery has taken over the local library archive and plans to use pictures in future exhibitions. Photo-projects in different cities are setting up new archives, often with unemployed groups. There is growing encouragement for a purposeful amateurism. The Museum of London's recent photography competition 'Marking Time' asked for pictures of Londoners in 1987 at work, commuting, shopping, during lunch hours or on evenings out; the outcome will be an exhibition on photography and history and additions to the museum's archive.

Ten.8 has recently brought to light more and more neglected archival strata, giving due attention to Afro-American photography. Here, too, insiders' representations of daily life press on larger historical realities. One of them was James Van DerZee, who caught the major figures of the Harlem Renaissance as they passed through his studio. These were what finally attracted notice and ultimate national celebrity at the age of 80 in 1967. But he was first and foremost a journeyman photographer who has left an unparalleled record of Harlem life in its everyday detail, without squalor, and in the terms which people chose for themselves. In Val Wilmer's 1984 essay on Van DerZee she notes that 'the ordinary pictures he made for the neighbourhood people have made his "discovery" one of the most important events in recent photographic history'.

Such photographs give us an expansive sense of a community, crowded with particularity, with allusions that invite imaginative speculation. Even the family photographs most of us have, whether glued in an album or bundled in a shoebox, hold their own enigmas, outside the reach of memory. There may be faces without names, puzzling family resemblances, corners of unknown landscape. Private photographs, our own and other people's, have a resonance beyond idle curiosity; they exist as broken narratives, clues on the trail of present time. These, their subjects ordinary people whose singular lives hold out mysteries and secrets, dreams and desires by the bucketful, can offer us the fictions of photography. □

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ARTS

CINEMA

Up the Balls Pond Road

Judith Williamson

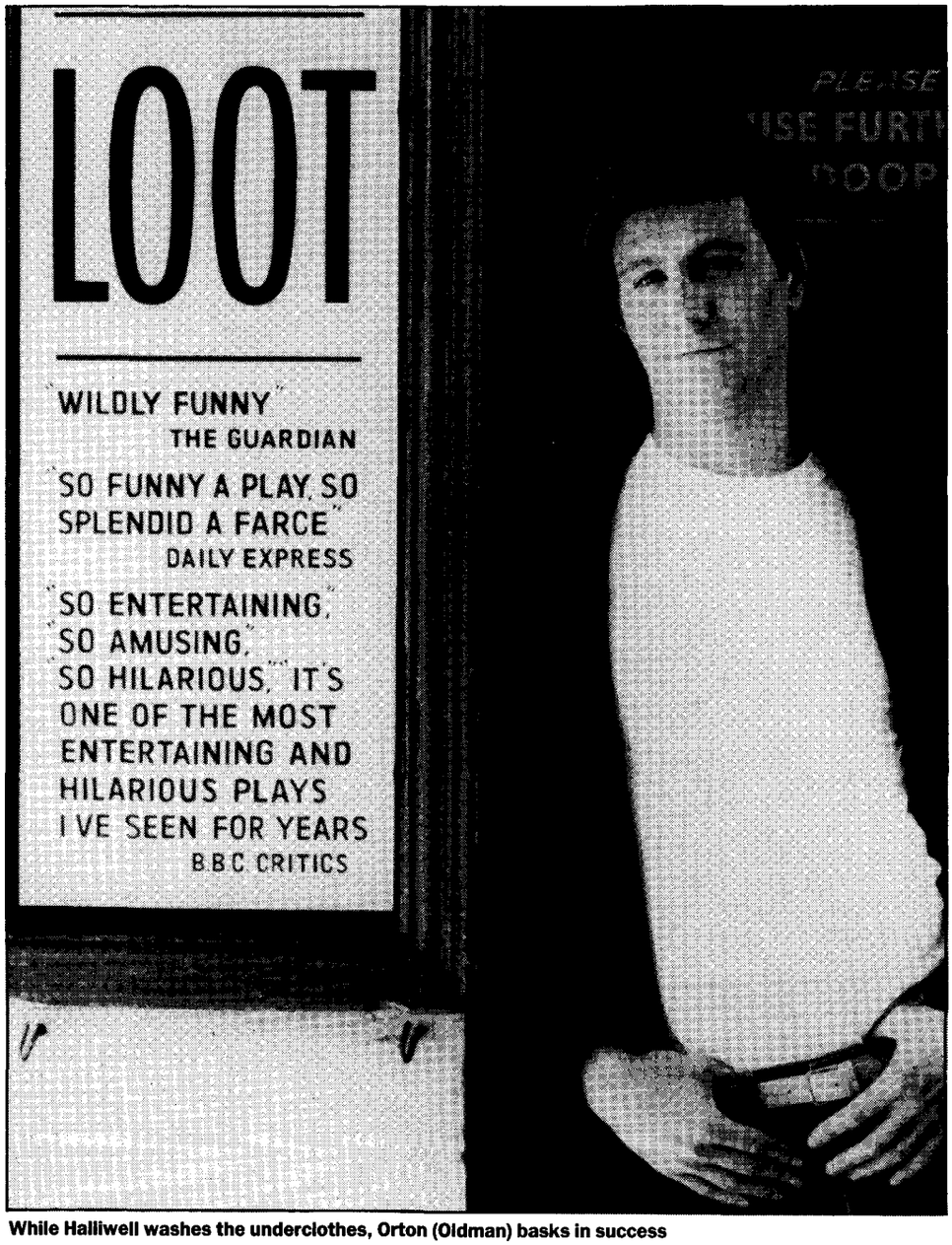
Prick Up Your Ears (18)
Curzon West End, Screen on the Green

OH, FOR THE DAYS before Islington was fashionable. When rented accommodation was cheap, when a duffle coat was just a duffle coat, when you could have it away on the emergency staircase because the Northern Line lifts worked. *'London was still quite exciting then. Remember that? No, no, you wouldn't.'* (I do, I do!) *'That was when?' '1967.'*

Absolute Beginners and *Dance with a Stranger* have brought us what we used to think of as the London of the future as the London of the past; now *Prick Up Your Ears* taps the same time fault. I am as much of a sucker as anyone for seeing my landscape invested with both nostalgia and illicit sexuality: as the Holloway Odeon throws its red neon across my desk in the 1987 twilight, the image of Orton's 1967 *Evening Standard* award lying in the urinal in Holloway gents while someone sucks him off provides at once a hotline to the past and a transgressive thrill. *'A homosexual, Miss Battersby.' 'In* Islington?' *'Haven't you noticed? Large areas of the borough are being restored and painted Thames Green.'*

Leaving aside the intriguing fact that my Islington council block has just been restored and painted Thames Green, I can't help feeling that this rich vein of the film speaks to something more than my local concerns. Trying to unravel what it means for us today to see gay (except it wasn't widely called that then) sex on the Northern Line is not an easy matter, but this movie is as much about an obsessively self-conscious view of our own post-war past as it is about gay relationships during that time.

It is Alan Bennett's script (based on John Lahr's biography) that introduces this focus. The Orton story — up and coming playwright murdered by his older, increasingly neglected lover Halliwell — is well known. But its telling through the double flashback device of Lahr's investigation and Margaret Ramsay's (Orton's agent's) memories, places the entire story squarely in the realm of both personal and public memory. The Lahr character's American ignorance treats us to endless nostalgic re-interpretations: *'What was the Festival of Britain?' 'Oh, that was when it all came off the ration.' 'You mean food and stuff.' 'Life, dear. Sex. Everything.'* So Orton and Halliwell make love for the first time during the coronation broadcast in their rented room in, of course, Islington, where the landlady bemoans the first greengrocers becoming an antique shop. The yearning for pre-bourgeoisification and the wish for something to transgress become hard to separate.


LOOT
WILDLY FUNNY"
THE GUARDIAN
SO FUNNY A PLAY, SO SPLENDID A FARCE"
DAILY EXPRESS
"SO ENTERTAINING, SO AMUSING, SO HILARIOUS," IT'S ONE OF THE MOST ENTERTAINING AND HILARIOUS PLAYS I'VE SEEN FOR YEARS
B.B.C. CRITICS

While Halliwell washes the underclothes, Orton (Oldman) basks in success

Interestingly, director Stephen Frears' last film, *My Beautiful Laundrette*, invested what one might call post-bourgeois London of the 1980s with just such a thrill through gay romance. But in *Prick Up Your Ears*, if there is one crucial point where his direction and Bennett's script seem to be at odds, it is in the presentation of Halliwell. Bennett's most interesting addition to the Orton story is his drawing out of the 'wife' theme — Halliwell's increasing frustration at washing the underclothes of his more famous lover, seeing his ideas unacknowledged in Orton's plays — and winding it into the outer narrative of Lahr, who also has a wife in the background, cooking, editing, acknowledged in the usual way in the preface: 'thanks to my wife Anthea without whom . . .' blah blah blah. This angle is clearly intended to give a 'wider', i.e. straight, application to the Orton/Halliwell 'marriage'.

However, in its visual presentation of their uneven relationship the film makes Halliwell unnecessarily grotesque, an ageing queen hardly able to put his wig on straight. Judging by the photos available, Halliwell was chunkily good-looking. Yet the film externalises his frustration and sense of failure literally on his overpainted face — you almost expect to see his make-up running à la *Death in Venice* — while Orton is cheekily cute and attractive throughout. Thus, in a way, Orton is salvaged for straight culture while Halliwell is sacrificed to it.

This caricature is not something written into Bennett's screenplay, but its tone is in keeping with another equally significant piece of distorting

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caricature which is very Bennett indeed. This is his apparent inability (c.f. *A Private Function*) to envisage the 'lower' or working class as anything other than *lower middle class*. In a nostalgic haze which passes for social comment, lace curtains, rubber gloves, *Housewives' Choice* and white-collar aspirations become blended together in an all-purpose LMC which is like one great collective character in a Mike Leigh play. Orton grew up in a council house in Leicester, with a background that I would describe as working-class. Yet Bennett is working in a genre where the very word 'Leicester' can be used as a gag all to itself ('He can't have learned it in Leicester', 'I hope nobody hears about this in Leicester' are key jokes) and further laughs are raised by the mere mention of Epsom, East Croydon, Reading and New Zealand.

Purley may have been funny once in Pinter but this is closer to *Private Eye*'s overworked Neasden. These jokes aren't just snobbery, but *confused* snobbery: in a bizarre irony, the post-war working class is portrayed as a caricature of its own aspirations. Whatever problems Orton might have faced being gay in relation to this background are subsumed in the royal road to camp which leads apparently seamlessly from his mother's false teeth to his lover's false hair.

Camp class comedy has a history running back through Monty Python to the radio shows of my childhood (even today the thought of Kenneth Williams' rendering of the words 'Balls Pond Road' makes me giggle). But it doesn't seriously investigate either class or sexuality. Ultimately, perhaps the nostalgia invoked by *Prick Up Your Ears* is as much for its own generic forerunners as for anything in its content. I enjoyed it; but searching that enjoyment I find a sort of municipal memory made up of stolen library books, *I'm Sorry I'll Read That Again* and Northern Line stairwells. *'Islington. Isn't that quite fashionable?' 'Not then, dear.'* Those were the days indeed. □

DANCE

Showing who's boss

Stephanie Jordan

Ballet Rambert
Sadler's Wells
Michael Clark and Company
Theatre Royal Brighton
Matthew Hawkins Imminent Dance Company
Riverside Studios

THERE IS A SUBTLE relationship between a choreographer's artistic ambitions and the particular qualities of the dancers who first realise the choreography. As New Dance choreographers have rightly observed, the issues are both political and artistic. Dancers need challenge, but pushing them to suit the choreographer's whim can be a misuse, with dancers treated as hapless, mindless objects, individual strengths dormant and even group identity diminished.

Obviously the ideal working base is the choreographer creating for his own regular group of dancers, chosen because they are likely and willing to grow into his or her style, but that is still no guarantee that the dancers will mature. Most mutually beneficial is the choreographer entering into a collaboration with his dancers and reconciling his own artistic predilections with their collective and personal style.

Alston's **Ballet Rambert** is now an outstanding example of such a collaboration. Apart from some early, uncertain essays into balleticism, Alston has always been both generous and challenging to his dancers, but, since he became Rambert's director a year ago, we have been thrilled by a Rambert style, distinctive and meticulous in detail and variety, reaching a stage of fine tuning. Now, the dancers are bold and fleet, yet sure-footed and impeccable in shaping and timing; they can indulge both a luxurious through-the-body movement and a striking leanness of line that comes from expansiveness and confident extension as much as physique. Some long-standing dancers epitomise this Rambert experience: like Mary Evelyn, Ruth Michelson and Lucy Bethune, who have all extended their personal scopes and passed into a new dimension of speed and suppleness.

The first night of the current Sadler's Wells season demonstrated, too, how intelligently Gary Lambert approaches his work. Alston has given him the 'Dutiful Ducks' solo originally made for Michael Clark, now with an addition, a delicious contrapuntal variation on the solo for Lambert and three women. Since first learning the part, Lambert has transformed his performance. With complete mastery of the tricky shifting mobility of this piece, he is able to punctuate it firmly with startling, high and noiseless elevations, and he has made the piece his own.

The Rambert commitment to shape and surefootedness is a distinguishing feature of their interpretation of Siobhan Davies' 'Rushes' and introduces an entirely different emotional stress from the original Second Stride account of the piece. Now, the tone of the opening lingers on, energy repressed rather than scattered and lost: it is the pressure of containment and the precision printing of limbs and feet ('rushes' in the cinematic sense) that is emphasised rather than lack of control. The physical sense of rush comes later. You have more time to admire the beauty of the dance patterns and their intersection with the sharp, luminous configurations from backdrop and lighting.

Michael Clark, whose debt to Alston is still as clear as his debt to ballet, continues to juxtapose rude anarchic spectacle with finely wrought passages of choreography in a highly personal idiom. Though the spectacle threatens to dominate, his enthusiasm for making steps and dancing remains. But his relationship to his company has changed. The early Clark team stunned us in 1984 with terrific, high-pitched dancing, a well-matched foursome, all exquisitely schooled but all ready, like Clark, to let go into lunacy and playfulness. It was an intimate group, Clark giving as much time to the other personalities as to his own. Since then, the company has grown, Clark has become a celebrity and the status of his companion dancers has diminished: the new members remain faceless (except Leslie Bryant, distinguished by his camp style, singing, etc.) while the company dance style has become uncertain.

The recent thoughtlessness about his performers is only one of the problems besetting Clark's work nowadays. He remains torn between the attractions of classical discipline and shameless showmanship without finding new questions to ask. The last work, 'Pure Pre-Scenes', premiered at the Brighton Festival, is a truly Clarkian medley: designer Leigh Bowery, late of the late Taboo Club, grotesquely padded and masked, finally dressed as a suggestive teapot; a fluently obscene recording of the telephone sex type; Clark dressed as a dinosaur (scaly legs and comical tail) sidestepping into his everyday role as a star: 'Back by popular demand' reads an accompanying slide projection; a pianist lying doggo and, to some Chopin Preludes (as usual), some exquisite fragments of dance.

While Clark appears increasingly thoughtless about work and dancers, **Matthew Hawkins**, recently in Clark's company and out of the same classical school, seems the archetypal autocrat. I admire Hawkins' tenacity in founding a 15-strong company and staging his work without the benefit of funding, a work with lavish design, extravagant costumes and miles of steps. It is therefore ignoble to condemn his 'Intravenous' and its movement business hung around various references to sex, a naughty virus and the immune system. It is fair to add that realising your choreographic ambitions is hard if you have no regular group of dancers. But the effect of those gathered by Hawkins was disturbing, most of them inexperienced and, as yet, inarticulate in the fidgety network of steps that Hawkins seems compelled to make. Thus the Imminents slammed their way through the evening, much hard grind without effect and a disservice most of all to themselves. Hawkins undoubtedly forced stamina and grit into them, but that is not the way for a choreographer to get at dance power or personal eloquence. □

VIDEO

Scratch the surface

Ian Penman

AT LEAST ONE THING is certain: this *won't be a video election*. As I write, election fever has only been rising for a few days and the media ether is already aswim, humid, stifled with what is called information. Radio, TV, billboards, print, the spoken word: all fall tacitly into the lines of this deployment. Yet video — purportedly the most radical medium of recent years — is silent. It seems that, if video has a revolutionary nature, it is one of absence, of withheld input.

But it doesn't take a general election to prompt one's suspicions in this area. What has video done? It seems to me that, under every deployment, video has changed nothing *radically*, and that video itself has not radically changed. It may be that 'video' as a sign of 'change', as something one can assign a 'radical' edge or character to, is already obsolete; or has barely scratched our surfaces; that, if anything, video has been altered or buffeted by changes whose result, whose afterimage, appears on video but which video itself does nothing to instigate.

There seems to be an urgent question here which is not at all a purely formal, aesthetic one — for video has taken on the divided cast of politics

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itself. Its most popular form (film library rental) has successfully tapped into a simple, undemanding populist demand; its few radicalisms are so marginal as to be almost invisible. Certainly, radical organisations, community projects, etc. 'use' video; these videos in turn are available for consumption by others who in some way are alert to their existence. But they still remain marginal and, in these postmodern times, that is tantamount to having taken a vow of silence. The same is very much true of Video (as) Art, where a fetishistic obsession with The Way the Medium Itself Works produces formal experiments of stultifying banality.

Most Pop Promo 'videos' are nothing of the sort (it's become a generic, a rubric, under which certain types of short films and scales of budget arrange themselves — along an axis which plugs directly into global leisure marketing strategies). Elsewhere, in the undergrowth, just as so many Independent bands labour lazily, contentedly, within a seductively constricted frame of reference under the bad sign of the Velvet Underground, so their videos rehash 1960s Warhol-esque, druggy, fingerpaint messiness as independent virtue *per se*. These are the traps of video's easy 'access' as a medium: it doesn't stretch people's vision. Amateurism can enable people to remain in their own ghetto without radically altering their own perceptions of it. All the advantages of video — demystification, not having to be regulated by b(r)ought-in professionals — have to weighed against an *a priori* negligible impact. It would seem that in many areas the potential market anarchism and subject electism offered by video has simply been pre-empted, increasingly ably, by Channel Four.

Right up to scratch . . . What is the power of scratch video? Can it still have claims to one? If anything it could be this: that, in however divergent the areas, people feel bound to make sense of video, and to use it to make sense.

The few glimpses one has had of video as 'subversive' tool is that of one which *makes nonsense* of other media. But, if it took 50 years for advertising to assimilate Surreal and DaDa collage techniques, it has taken only the blink — + *blink/link/link* — of an eye for mainstream media to capitalise on scratch's cutting edge. It is already a late 20th-century cultural cliché: the smart ellision of the moment for modish TV credits and youth-trap ads. The original subversive idea was that one could siphon and control, and thereby subvert, imagery and information to one's own ends. Scratch seems to have fallen victim to a blindness to the ways in which the specific power(s) of a medium, and that medium's devices, progress in relation to the power which always oversees it; and of how this relationship is maintained to ensure that successive innovations or deviances work to produce a distribution or dissemination of the same, without making or suggesting any real difference. What is given over as the means to produce an image, or feel power, or intervene (you too can plug in to a communications network that is expanding to embrace the universe) in no way effects or opens up power. Controls, distribution, censorship *are still decided for you*.

A recent, inadvertently hilarious DIY video programme on BBC1 gave us an image of how the institution sees the potential home videomaker — as a kind of Richard Briers-type character who might use his or her 'knowledge' to make documentaries on steam locomotives or, at the outermost limit (a kind of techno amateur theatre), to make 'spooky' short films. (This last because 'spookiness' is the easiest effect to achieve.) Video, that is, implies absolutely no disjunction of cultural life — indeed, most of the programme's examples seemed to have been filmed in some cosy rural backwater, giving ironic new meaning to the idea of the Global Village.

The universe implied was one touched but untroubled by video. One couldn't help but reflect that they might as *well* have included a guide to scratch video — just another technique,use it how you may. Depending on the result of the coming election (and its longterm cultural implications) the choices of video as radicalism, of media intervention, of theory and specialisation, may be placed under the threat of severest limitation. Videobrats will have to decide whether the baseless and frequently all too facile 'radical' surface of 'postmodern' malarky is really an adequate response to their world. □

MUSIC

Boys will be boys

Jon Savage

AFTER AN INDECENTLY long lay-off, pop has some new Bad Boys. The Beastie Boys' first visit to the UK since the extraordinary success of their debut LP *Licensed to Ill* (no. 1 in the USA for six weeks) has been heralded by some vintage tabloid activity. With headlines like 'Brawling Beastie', 'Beastie Boys Go Bonkers' and, most titillatingly, 'Pop Idols Sneer At Dying Kids', we were on ground so familiar — and so reassuring — that it could have come out of one of those Comic Strip Enid Blyton parodies.

This is obviously as indicative of current tabloid diversions as it is of any real story: the Montreux Festival, where these outrages were apparently perpetrated, is a stage-managed, consensual binge where the press and TV collect to watch (and hype) a clutch of the current music industry products miming to their wares. In this context, the Beastie Boys were only doing what they're paid to do: live up to their deliberately childish name.

So consensual is this process that it's hardly worth remarking on, except that the Beastie Boys aren't just a hype but the most visible example of a process — both musical and cultural — that has thrown up some interesting contradictions. Their success marks the final overturn — some ten years after it happened in the UK — of the post-hippie hegemony that has had a stranglehold on American pop; it has been accomplished by three upper-middle-class New Yorkers, all born between 1965 and 1967, who have integrated Seventies hard rock styles (whether Punk or Heavy Metal) with the braggadocio of current black rap pushed to the point of total obnoxiousness. Their producer, Rick Rubin, is the most sought-after producer of the year, while their label, Def Jam, is the hottest on both sides of the Atlantic.

The opening track on *Licensed to Ill*, 'Rhymin & Stealin', samples the drumbeat from Led Zeppelin's 'When The Levee Breaks', integrates it into the song's structure and adds suitably piratical phrases (some lifted from the Sex Pistols) delivered in a hoarse whine. Elsewhere, 'She's Crafty' directly steals the guitar riff from Led Zeppelin's 'The Ocean'. This is postmodernist plunder in excelsis: both Rubin and the Beastie Boys have taken up the gauntlet thrown down by Grandmaster Flash's 1982 'Wheels Of Steel', which collaged six existing songs into a new track. Using the new sampling technology, they've pushed this collaging to its logical, formal limit. Its influence has been immediate, not only on other Def Jam acts like Public Enemy or Tashan, but on hip hop and white pop.

This formal innovation is allied to a theoretical polemic. It's no accident that the most sensational Fleet Street fantasy homed in on the Beastie Boys' alleged mistreatment of sick children. The whole point of the Def Jam operation — particularly Rick Rubin's side of it — has been to create a new teen music, and that means driving a wedge into the current hegemony of pop as an adult, caring, sharing medium, epitomised by Live Aid, Farm Aid, the Sun City record *et al*. This means not only taking on the 'forbidden', gross style of heavy metal but also its attitudes. Given the almost psychotic self-assertion in modern hip hop, this has resulted in the Beastie Boys and Public Enemy mixing music that is formally exciting with lyrics that are violent, misogynist and homophobic in the extreme. This is Bad Taste in spades, and doesn't end there: with new group Slayer, Def Jam has graduated to heavy metal, with explicit lyrics about murder in general and Auschwitz in particular.

The Beastie Boys (and most Def Jam products, bar the gentler, more affirmative Tashan) are at once liberating but oppressive: their studied lack of taste makes for excellent pop records but lousy attitudes. There is, of course, a wind up here: if you get upset at the bad taste, or by people saying the unacceptable (as did Fleet Street in its stupid, moralistic way), then you fall right into the trap. But so what? This sort of double take is new in US pop but not here, where it's become degraded currency in the ten years since punk. Now it just seems intellectually sloppy and socially ignorant

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(like the writing of Julie Burchill) — as lazy as the Beastie Boys pretending to be stupider than they actually are. Irony always evaporates on contact with the mass market and the Beastie Boys' white hip hop has pandered to an all-American, all-male Animal House-type grossness at the same time as it's dragged American pop into the present.

It would be easy to dismiss the Beastie Boys (and Def Jam) were it not for the quality of their music, whose power gives one element of their polemic some weight. To attempt to steamroller pop into a purely 'socially useful', adult and caring role is to ignore its roots in base emotions and to impose a purpose on it that doesn't readily coexist with what pop is actually used for. The very refusal of base pleasures has been one of the historical failures of socially concerned pop. Yet Def Jam is no better, indeed far worse, because of an opportunity missed: its stylistic transformations are allied not to a wish similarly to transform the world, but to a studied reinforcement of some of its more objectionable aspects. In this respect, despite its humour, Def Jam has swallowed the values of the political and cultural climate which it pretends to counter. □

TELEVISION

Plumbing new depths

Hugo Williams

CONNOISSEURS of ghastliness may like to consider **The Corner House** (C4). I think they will agree that this is a genuine breakthrough, even for television.

The Corner House has received considerable advance publicity. It is the non-sexist, laid-back comedy about a large, empty café owned by an out gay called Gilbert (Christopher Eymard) and his half-in-half-out assistant Dave (Robert Llewellyn). Eymard is the sort of actor who knows that gays hurry about with tiny, shuffling steps like a Japanese geisha girl, closing their eyes and throwing back their heads when they're offended. Llewellyn is the kind who believes that the art of acting is somehow mystically allied to the art of shouting.

I was going to say that perhaps it wasn't their fault that they come across as the two worst actors ever to appear on television, given the quality of the lines they were required to speak. Unfortunately there can be no exoneration on that score. It seems they wrote the stuff themselves. It's their baby. Their heart's desire. A beautiful and fruitful collaboration of like minds. Which makes sense really, as no single person who was half-way sane would bother typing up this garbage: they'd need a second party to be sitting there with them like a Samaritan, holding their hand and telling them their stuff wasn't *that* bad. Watching the results, you can almost smell the artificially low boiling point of the pair's enthusiasms for their project as they get down to another script conference.

Their first half hour was all about whether or not to move aside an old dresser to make a fire door. Gilbert doesn't want it touched because it belonged to his deceased lover Ernest. The fireman is adamant. Gilbert throws his head back and closes his eyes. Dave shouts at everyone. 'Oh

WORK IN PROGRESS

Transports of horror

Naseem Khan

'PORTSMOUTH,' declare the stickers round the town, 'Birthplace of Australia!' It is a claim regarded wryly by one of the groups brought over to take part in Portsmouth's Festival 200 years after the First Fleet set out to colonise Australia. That country's Aborigines, whose music, dance and visual art is included in this far-ranging festival, hardly consider Portsmouth the birthplace of their nation.

Aborigines have little cause to rejoice in the bicentennial. 'Every acre of land in these districts,' recorded a Brisbane settler in 1897, 'was won from the Aborigines by bloodshed and warfare.' Culture and livelihood destroyed, their faces gaze out of the photographs in the Hornpipe Gallery's exhibition, 'Australia: On Aboriginal Land', with an expressionless rancour. Isobel Flick, a big woman in an old-fashioned cotton dress, sits up to her bare thighs in the waters of the Barwan River. Till 1952, when the council bulldozed the site, the area had been her tribe's ancestral lands. 'I come back to this place,' she is quoted as saying, 'to renew my strength. We have to keep fighting for our rights.'

The compact exhibition isn't, however, primarily about victims. Its purpose is to air the fight for Land Rights — a cause, says film- and video-maker Tracey Moffatt, on which successive administrations have retreated — and to record the campaign's aboriginal leaders. Separating art and politics, says Moffatt, who's already been arrested once in Portsmouth demonstrations, is impossible. 'Quite frankly, being an aboriginal person here, I can't sit back while this ridiculous thing is going on.'

Moffatt's own work — and that of an exciting range of other visual artists — is included in another show, 'Art and Aboriginality', that's as clear about its stance as the one at the Hornpipe. 'Aborigines,' says the catalogue's introduction, 'have something better than a conquest to celebrate: they have survived one.'

The contents of the show have many functions: to invoke memories, to give instructions, to be spiritual maps and, in more recent work, to give expression to conflict. Some are traditional, using a private system of coding and symbols. Sinuous lines stand for journeys (mythological and/or actual — for levels of reality become conflated). Elliptical shapes imply common elements — people round a settlement, animals, objects — their relationships and dispositions all meaning worlds to people who can read the pictures. The tone is harmonious, rhythmical. Some images are full of an urgent energy, like 'Bush Potato Dreaming' by Paddy Nelson. Some have a stringent dignity, like George Milpurrurru's fine 'Hollow Log/Bone Coffin Story'. The younger generation of 'city artists' (often art school trained) keep an explicit link with the past. It's there directly, for instance, in Banduk Marika's linocuts, drawn from themes of her celebrated painter uncle and father. It's there, a less direct inheritance, in the paintings of young James Simon: in his 'Discovering a Living Culture', with its cerulean-girdled Australia, its sea bounding with dolphins, its interior replete with wildlife and the occasional stick-like black man. On the shore, at one point, is a single white footprint.

At the same time, some things are unexpectedly familiar. 'I want to be known simply as Trevor Nickolls the painter,' says a 'city artist' in the catalogue. 'I find it restricting to be labelled an Aboriginal painter.' The new generation of painters faces choices and dilemmas that will remind many of the state of black art here. Is minority status limiting, or separation liberating? How can traditions be reinterpreted? How can art works be created that speak to the collective understanding from which they spring yet make their way too in mainstream (Australian) art?

The Festival — which is a separate organisation from the Bicentennial — has also remembered that Aborigines may have been the worst but were not the only ones to suffer in the building of Australia. *The Transport*, an original folk-opera — and a rare example of the breed — by Peter Bellamy shows another side to the grandeurs of the First Fleet: its 778 convicts. Bellamy settled on the true story of two of them — Henry and Susannah Cabell, sentenced first to death in Norwich Jail and then to transportation. His 90-minute piece, its music derived from and based on traditional folk, takes them from the cruelties of 18th-century England to settlement in Australia.

The Transport has been in existence as a score (and the occasional production) for some time. Where its current director, Taffy Thomas, is lucky is in the setting. Portsmouth's New Theatre is one of the most beautiful and evocative spaces I have been in. Built by Frank Matcham and C.J. Phipps, it is now largely decayed and, although it is admittedly rather cold, it has a melancholy beauty in its muted blue-grey mouldings that perfectly fits Bellamy's tuneful, pleasant piece. Thomas makes good use of the space's potential, sending his large cast clambering down ropes from the grand circle and boxes. Where he is less successful is in his incorporation of a trio of contemporary dancers to interpret and illustrate the Cabell story. Thomas' desire to stop folk being presented as a period curiosity piece is entirely laudable, but this is not the way. The artifice of the dance contrasts with the apparent artlessness of the folk music and helps neither side.

Finding new forms for old products is rarely easy. The aboriginal painters have managed the transition from body and ground painting to bark painting triumphantly. Folk opera has yet to find that sense of certainty. □

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no, I'm not like other straight men, am I?' Tears threaten, then suddenly they make it up. The fireman is gay too! 'An out gay fireman!' cries Gilbert in ecstasy, clasping his hands in a nearly half-witted smirk. Actually, it isn't nearly as amusing as it sounds. The next week's offering concerned a female plumber (joke) who had come to install a bidet (joke) in the gents (uproar). 'You know what, Gilbert,' she says, 'it's really great seeing a bidet fitted in England, because not many men, you know, wash themselves down there. The English think they're so clean, but the rest of the Continent think they stink. When I got back I found I had to wash men before I slept with them, so I got interested in plumbing.'

Gilbert thinks he has seen the plumber somewhere before. The local convenience perhaps? No, she turns out to be his daughter. And why not? How else do you round these things off? As Dave shouts: 'Well, what's wrong with a gay man becoming a father?' This was talentlessness coming out of the closet with a vengeance. Such quasi-liberated twaddle would be okay if it had a dash of satirical self-knowledge, but the two main characters here are part of a mutual admiration society with their authors.

War On Drugs (ITV) was only accidentally satirical. Drugs, and the war on them, is one of those subjects one seems to know everything about already. Whenever there's a war-on-drugs programme, with lots of worrying new figures, I always feel slightly surprised and disappointed that the situation isn't worse. No matter how many addicts they say there are, living in no matter what degree of squalor, and no matter how many bags of cocaine the Post Office delivered to them last year, it always seems there were more in the previous programme. I think I may be spoilt for war-on-drugs programmes. In this even less worrying than usual round-up, we had a mock debate about a hypothetical 'small, dry' drugs producing country called 'Xanadu'. Coleridge's laudanum habit wasn't discussed. Nor did the person from Porlock knock on the studio door to put an end to the proceedings.

Were the debaters likewise hypothetical? I didn't believe for a moment that they were real diplomats, politicians and law enforcement officers sitting there. They all seemed totally out of their depth in this confusing, hypothetical world that had been created for their benefit. Added to which, they were all wearing strange, combed-forward toupés, as if they were in disguise, or on the run, or on the make.

Gold (BBC1) was another programme suffering from an overdose of expectedness. If I told you that three and a half years after the Brink's-Mat robbery most of the men who took part are still at large and almost half the gold bullion of £26m. in 6,800 gold bars is still unaccounted for, that it has been converted by a complicated route involving 'front' companies in the Isle of Man and banks in the Caribbean, some of it being used to finance a drugs syndicate in Florida with the huge profits being invested in Britain as 'clean' money, you might get the feeling you had heard this robbery before. Perhaps it is something to do with the inflationary principle of modern life that statistical documentaries so quickly lose their charm. If they ran it again in a few years' time everyone would be baffled that so many men were willing to work so hard for so little reward. □

Books

FICTION

Women at bay

Helen Birch

The Book of Mrs Noah
MICHÈLE ROBERTS *Methuen* £10.95

ONE OF THE MAIN preoccupations of Michèle Roberts' writing has been her attempt to rework Christian (specifically Catholic) myth through the lives of her women characters — and to move

Michèle Roberts: working on God

beyond the dualism of good/evil, virgin/whore. With the intransigence born of atheism, I've found that her fictions (with the exception of *A Piece of the Night*) belong to an exclusive club to which materialists are not admitted; the enduring oppressiveness and fascination with symbols of faith seem too intensely self-referential.

The Book of Mrs Noah is Roberts' most ambitious and carefully conceived novel to date. Through the character of Mrs Noah, the nameless wife, the not-man, she refracts her themes — of women and writing, motherhood as cultural symbol and as social pressure/enigmatic desire — taking her on a voyage into a lost history of the feminine.

Mrs Noah is a librarian; she classifies information, tries to find order. She also wants a child. Her husband demurs, arguing the irresponsibility of bringing a child into this 'poisoned place'. In Venice, the floating city of dreams, she has a vision of an ark, filled with women: outcasts and amazons who want to write. Joined by five sybils, prophetesses of the future — mothers, wives, lesbians, a Black woman, mourners — she creates a '*salon des refusées. Des refusantes*'. Together, they discuss the problems of writing as a woman, rehearse old arguments about feminism and creativity, and exchange stories. The ark becomes Protean, a womb, the mother's body, containing the history and dreams of all the women. God puts in an appearance too, as male Author and maker of canons; the women call him The Gaffer. His Bible is the Word which holds theirs in place, the ego which defines theirs as alter/Other. The sybils' struggle for a language to tell their own stories takes the narrative back into mythology, to the original Mrs Noah, to the servant raped by her master, to sexualities denied and punished.

The narrator's 'I' begins to break up. Mrs Noah is Everywoman, like Eve or Lilith, a consciousness without a centre, whose journey to the source of her own dilemma rests on the ideal of a shared past. She finds herself trapped in the conundrums of masculine logic and feminine silences: 'Therefore women are not. Therefore I will not become a mother. Therefore I want to become a mother. Therefore I cannot find a way out.' She consults her riddle book to find a stable sign, only to find words whose meanings multiply and inflect.

The novel's structure is intricate: debates are picked up, dropped, re-woven with another theme. The effect is somewhere between symphony and cacophony; the writing is sometimes too clotted with images, too self-conscious to be really rich. Yet Roberts' refusal of a stable subjectivity allows her to explore psychological as well as literary terrain, and to dissolve the borders between the two. She is one of a very few contemporary feminist novelists who engage with and reform the theories of the academy in her work. Her ideas can be set in play with Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, the theories of Julia Kristeva. The women on the ark re-experience what Kristeva calls the 'semiotic': the pre-Oedipal moment before language. They are bound to the body of the mother — to rhythm, movement and melody — yet paradoxically left wanting, barred from any stable signification or meaning. The ark is a 'long twist of words spun out of loss'. Women exist as lack. Men appear as children, fixed to the mother's breast. Yet all the voices in the novel are bound together through the idea of Everywoman, the Other of Christian myth; what is psychoanalytically true about sexual difference is turned into a universal, *lived* truth. Difference is a condition of gender alone.

The Book of Mrs Noah is playful, allusive and challenging. But, for all the splitting, the debunking of dualistic thought, there's a circularity about Mrs Noah's journey, a desire for unity. There are no lived diversities left in the novel; everything is pared down to the dream of a

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common language, a collective history, where plurality has no place. At the core of the novel, there's a whole Woman, a self who can be alienated, cut off, can still fall from grace. Despite itself, the floating city of dreams remains bound to the heavenly idea of its own creation. □

FICTION

World without love

Jenny Diski

From Sleep Unbound
ANDRÉE CHEDID trans. SHARON SPENCER
Serpent's Tail £4.95

ANDRÉE CHEDID's *From Sleep Unbound* is a passionate study of life imprisonment. The prison is the social world that Samya, the main character, inhabits; the jailers, the men who maintain and reinforce the system.

It is not a new proposition perhaps, but this translation from the French reaches us over a decade after its original publication. And the difference between this feminist *cri* and many others we have read is the efficiency of the system it describes. The novel takes place in Egypt, where patriarchy reigns supreme and where even the modicum of awareness and discomfort that has seeped into western patriarchal attitudes is entirely missing. The system is intact and unreflecting.

We follow Samya from prison to prison. Already, at convent school, caged by uniform and rigid discipline, she is drained of life. Then to her home, motherless and populated by a father and brothers who have no interest in her beyond their concern to find her a husband as soon as possible to take on the burden of keeping her fed. Finally, at 15, to marriage where she is no more than a vessel for producing a male heir. There is not a glimmer of warmth from anyone in her life, and yet, as she moves from one incarceration to the next, each holds some hope before it is entered, merely because it is different. An illusion, since each stage is no more than another aspect of the same patriarchal structure. Boredom and oppression combine to drive all energy away. Chedid depicts a social world that denies psychic life to half the population. It is a narration of despair.

Even Samya's fantasies of happiness are circumscribed by the totality of the system. How a prisoner perceives release depends on what kind of prison they are in. Samya's prison is cold and devoid of love, even affection. Lovelessness is the central torment. Her dreams are of a happier kind of prison. 'My human life could not be this, only this. I refused to accept it . . . I refused to believe that for the women of my country . . . money was a compensation for solitude. No one ever looked at these women with the sort of love that can transform life . . . I wanted to discover, reflected in a pair of loving eyes, the image of the woman I could have been.'

When she is confronted by the women of the village and wants to make contact she offers them a version of her life warmed with a fantasy of how it should have been: her father's pain at her loss;

Andrée Chedid: hope against hope

the flowers and love letters sent by her suitor. Freedom or independence from those who hand her around for economic motives is not an available dream. Even fantasies must have some basis in reality.

The reader must be content with the single act of rebellion that begins and ends the book. Samya, finally physically as well as psychically paralysed, shoots her husband and waits passively for society to take revenge. The single gleam of hope is a young girl she has befriended who runs away, we are to suppose, towards independence and creative freedom. The trouble is that the writer has done her job too well. You can't imagine where this girl could run to in such a world where the men are cold, unloving oppressors, the women obedient and furtive. We are given no hint of other possibilities. On the contrary, Chedid offers us Samya's husband as the archetype, the source of all oppression. 'I hated Boutros . . . I saw him and all the Boutros's in the world in their rigid authoritarianism. They ruled over destinies; they crushed plants, songs, colours, they crushed life itself. And they reduced everything to the shrivelled proportions of their own hearts. All these Boutros's advancing! But a day would come . . .'

Chedid is sometimes over-explanatory, tipping uncomfortably into the polemic. We are told too often of the universality of Samya's condition in a tone that approaches rhetoric. 'Others beside myself must have felt their souls worn away by the interminable length of a life without love . . . If I cry out, I am crying out for them as well as myself . . . And if there is only one who understands me, it is for her that I protest from the depths of my being as loudly as I can.' The strength of the novel lies in the way it communicates despair. We, as readers, are required to live through the hopelessness, share in it. It should be possible, of course, both to participate in the experience of despair and to analyse its causes, but the flights into rhetoric weaken the power of the narrative and begin to seem over-simplified. The unswerving cruelty of all the men and the insensitivity of the women who uphold the status quo is presented, but never examined in any depth. We get only heartless cyphers. I found myself wanting more than this. What kind of victims are the men, and the women who reinforce the male view? If love is the answer, as Chedid suggests, then, in this loveless world, everyone must be losers and the oppressors as much victims of the system as the oppressed. □

FICTION

Bread and butter

Paul Hallam

Ernesto
UMBERTO SABA trans. MARK THOMPSON *Carcanet* £9.95

SABA IS HEBREW for bread, and the pen-name of this Italian poet suits his work — homely images: basic, essential, sustaining. *Ernesto* was his 'secret' novel, read to friends but thought by Saba to be 'unpublishable, because of the language'. The choice of painting for the cover, albeit by a contemporary Trieste artist, won't help the bookshop browser to guess the secret. In the painting a woman strolls by the sea. In the book a 28-year-old man falls in love with a 16-year-old boy.

Written in the 1950s, the unfinished *Ernesto* is set in Saba's hometown, Trieste, at the turn of the century. Bread again in the setting — the man and boy work in a depot, distributing flour from Hungarian mills to the city bakers. The man asks all the leading questions, like 'Do your crowns go on women?', but Ernesto needs no hints. His response is entirely practical: 'If we're going to do things we shouldn't do, don't we have to be alone?' The sex takes place among the flour sacks and, as Ernesto later admits, 'I met him more than half-way.' He startles, almost embarrasses the man: '"You want to put it up my arse," Ernesto said with serene innocence.' Ernesto is incapable of lying, he works out his response to sex simply by trying it. He enjoys the experience and wants to allay the man's fear of betrayal. It's Ernesto's sense of the absurd that nearly gives the game away; he finds the idea of cocoa-butter cones inserted to ease pain quite hysterically funny. At one point he cryptically shouts, 'No more CONES!' in front of his mother when the man visits his home. Ernesto eventually tires of the man's attentions, plays practical jokes on his conservative employer, gets himself the sack, has a haircut and first shave, visits an elderly prostitute and falls for a boy younger than himself.

The narrative is slight and fragmented, the glory is in the style, and Mark Thompson's translation reads beautifully. Saba thought *Ernesto* was the

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best thing he had ever written, but was never able to finish it: 'the author is too old, too weary, too embittered' to go on. It's a book of parentheses and qualifications, the author interpreting the action or looking forward to the fate of his characters and their city in the coming century. Saba's commentary is melancholic — Trieste *tristesse*, comic, startling, ruminative, like Barthes at his most personal. It's about limits, emotional, economic and social. When characters misunderstand each other's words and gestures, Saba gently reflects on their dilemmas, usually in an aside.

Tenderness is limited from the start, the man fears he will frighten the boy or that the boy will look down on him. Making love he utters 'something coarse' instead of expressing the wonder he feels; he longs for kisses, but 'boys don't know how to give or accept them'. When he does call Ernesto 'Angel', Ernesto points out that angels don't do sex, they don't even have bodies. The boy is not unkind; his response to sex, like his socialism, is simple and honest. The man's tenderness in wiping the boy after sex is ambiguous, 'from kindness or to make sure he left no trace'. He worries that the boy will be offended by gifts, and besides he is poor. The compromise, pastries, is ideal — cheap and, again, leaving no trace. Gifts for boys are dangerous, an outside constraint. The man is not prepared to let Ernesto take an active role, there are codes and limits even within their illegal love.

Ernesto's mother loved her son 'but thought it was her duty not to show it'. She fails to comprehend the major 'catastrophe' Ernesto feels on having his first shave; he 'never liked to lose any part of himself'. When the mother does kiss her son she for once 'followed her heart; she sent morality and its abject homilies to the devil (i.e. back to their true father)'. The occasional breakthrough to tenderness proves stunning when everything conspires to block it.

Ernesto's crabby, Germanophile employer will die in the gas chamber. The almost unwittingly anarchic Ernesto who 'adored asking questions and adored asking permission to ask them' will suffer for his knowledge. The hints and parentheses take you beyond the immediate episodes. Saba has an immense respect for his characters, and a sense too of how they'll be damaged. Mark Thompson's ample preface and friendly, thorough notes relate the clearly autobiographical novel to the life and poetry of its author. This is a fresh and warm book, in a firm crust. □

COUNTRYSIDE

Keep out

Fraser Harrison

This Land is Our Land
MARION SHOARD *Paladin* £5.95

IN HER FIRST BOOK Marion Shoard unleashed a ferocious attack on farmers, charging them with a long list of crimes against the environment which she summed up under her provocative, though wholly justified, title: *The Theft of the Countryside*. Now she is on the warpath again, but this time her enemy is the whole class — or 'regime', to use her phrase — of rural landowners, whose activities she condemns as an 'unmitigated tyranny' and whose crimes are against us, the landless public, and what we fondly think of as our civil rights. A certain pastoral delicacy has tended to inhibit writers on this side of the countryside controversy, and so it is refreshing, exhilarating even, to line up behind someone with a style of polemic which is shamelessly pugnacious.

Her new book, published by Paladin as an original and bearing another forthright title, *This Land is Our Land*, is long, perhaps too long, but extremely thorough. Wielding a blunter weapon than the one she uses to fight contemporary issues, she begins by examining the history of landownership in Britain. This yields few surprises, though it is always surprising to discover that our countryside today is owned, by and large, by those who have always owned it, the royal family, the aristocracy, the upper ranks of the gentry. In a nutshell, no less than 80 per cent of rural Britain (itself about 80 per cent of the total surface) is owned by individuals, the majority of whom are the latest descendents in long lines of ownership. These latterday barons are not merely surviving, but flourishing, and are, if anything, extending the size of their holdings. Contrary to popular myth, neither democracy nor taxes on inheritance have, it seems, done anything to pauperise them or diminish their influence.

And what does it mean for the rest of us that the land is in the possession of a privileged handful? The answer lies in the owners' attitude to their property — and this, Shoard bitingly explains, is determined by a three-sided obsession, with wealth, power and, less predictably, with privacy. She has many illuminating things to say about the landed wealthy and how they contrive to stay that way; though, despite strenuous efforts, she is unable completely to pierce the cloak of secrecy and mystification with which they protect their affairs. Her task would have been made far easier had the Thatcher government not abolished the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth within three months of taking office. Even so, the Commission had already disclosed that the richest one per cent of the population owned more than 52 per cent of all personally owned land, which was no doubt the kind of research that hastened its end. But one fact shines quite clearly through the fog of obfuscation: owning large stretches of rural land, especially farm land, is still the surest way in our industrialised and fiscally repressive country to remain rich and to become richer.

What outrages Shoard more than anything else, however, is the British landowner's conviction that to own is to exclude. It turns out that our land, at least as far as the law is concerned, is in fact their land, for no right of access exists in the countryside unless indicated. On the Continent the presumption runs the other way and, in Sweden, there is a customary right of *Allemansrätten* authorising anybody to walk over anybody else's land providing no damage or disturbance is caused. One of the many admirable objectives of this book is to have such a principle instituted in our own laws.

Under the heading 'The Broken Contract' Shoard argues most eloquently and convincingly for the ordinary citizen's right to walk the countryside and have a decisive say in the development of farming and forestry. Since the war this right has not been respected; indeed its existence has barely been acknowledged. At our expense, the farming landowner has grown exceedingly rich and added to already gratuitous privileges, but without honouring the bargain. While reducing much of the environment — our countryside — to ruins, this farming landowner has also shut the farm gate on us, blocked off our footpaths and snatched our common land, reducing us to a nation of trespassers. To put it more formally, as Shoard does herself, the heart of the problem is that, for historical and other reasons, rural landowners tend to regard their ownership as absolute, whereas the public, defending a variety of interests, is beginning to campaign for a radical revision of the idea of ownership, involving the recovery of ancient rights and the creation of some new ones.

Shoard makes her own proposals, notably a new rural land tax, as well as changes in the laws of trespass and changes in the planning regulations, to bring farmers under the same public control as urban property developers. However, it would be unfair to judge this valuable book simply by the immediate feasibility of its proposals, which, to be frank, stand no chance of being realised in law without the support of a greatly strengthened Labour Party. No, Shoard's foremost achievement, apart from providing a mass of important information, is to make clear that The Struggle for Britain's Countryside (her subtitle) has hardly started and will not be won without a proper understanding of land and the politics of ownership. Hers is the best book I have read on that subject. □

HOLOCAUST

Less equal than others

Nancee Oku Bright

The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War Against Homosexuals
RICHARD PLANT *Mainstream* £9.95

TO DATE, MOST of the studies concerned with the Holocaust have focused on the 'major atrocity'. What has not been adequately covered in the past is that Hitler's plan included other categories: gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, anti-fascists, Communists and homosexuals; racial, political and sexual deviants and thus 'enemies of the state'. During the years of Nazi rule thousands of these people also perished in concentration camps. In order that one category, gays, should no longer remain an historical footnote Richard Plant has written *The Pink Triangle*, named after the symbol sewn to their camp uniforms.

Plant, both gay and Jewish, fled Frankfurt for Switzerland on 27 February 1933, the day the Reichstag was burned to the ground. He narrowly missed a first-hand account of the experiences on which this book is based. Later, he emigrated to the USA; then, after the war, resolved to find out

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what had happened to gay friends and acquaintances during that period. His search, though often futile, led him back to Germany and to the writing of this book. Based on diaries and interviews, as well as concentration camp records and conventional histories, it represents one of the first comprehensive accounts of the treatment of gays under the Nazis.

Homosexuals in Germany enjoyed a flourishing sub-culture during the Weimar Republic. Their persecution, however, began less than two months after Hitler assumed the chancellorship. The Nazis began to employ provocative language designed to inflame the prejudices of the German people. The concept of 'volk' was consistently evoked in opposition to that of the 'deviant'. Homosexuals, like Jews and gypsies, were 'subhuman'. Worse, they were 'sociosexual saboteurs' and 'moral degenerates' whose 'contagious disease' would mean the ultimate end of the German nation. As early as 1928 the Nazis added a new dimension to patriotism, declaring that 'anyone who thinks of homosexual love is our enemy' — though sex between women was not criminalised.

Plant traces the rise of the Nazis' persecution of gays and comes up with one major protagonist, Heinrich Himmler. It was Himmler who created the Federal Security Office for Combating Abortion and Homosexuality and later sanctioned experiments in which 'genuine' homosexuals were castrated and their bodies inundated with hormones in order to make them heterosexual.

The homosexual, in Himmler's opinion, 'must be entirely eliminated'. Plant estimates that, of the 50,000 to 63,000 men convicted of homosexuality, between 5,000 and 15,000 died in the camps.

For pink triangle survivors, the end of the war did not end their discrimination. Although they too had been labelled 'enemies', the homophobic tendencies of the greater society meant that both within the camps and outside they were never accepted as 'equal victims'. Too often they lost the supportive network of family and friends not because, as in the case of many Jews, it no longer existed, but because those people often refused to acknowledge their existence. When Plant and researchers before him sought to interview ex-gay inmates, they discovered that the few survivors had often devised fictions to explain their incarceration.

The business of judging any book written on the Holocaust is a delicate one. This one, however, possesses integrity and, if it falls short, it is because the data are incomplete and often unreliable. It is, in any case, an overview, not intended to be encyclopaedic: only recently the the US-based Holocaust Memorial Council commemorated the death of the thousands of gypsies killed during the Third Reich; *The Pink Triangle* is an attempt at amending the historical bias, drawing attention to the 'other' victims of the Holocaust.

Also, in this brave book, Plant warns us to be on the lookout for those religious and secular fanatics who are assured that they have the right answers. It is a realistic warning, particularly relevant in light of the social and moral intolerance being shown toward gays as a result of Aids. The idea of 'unequal victim' has again gained currency in a society which believes itself to be threatened by its minorities. Distinctions are made between haemophiliacs who are 'inadvertently' exposed to the virus and gay men and drug addicts who, because of their 'vices', have 'brought it upon themselves'. When government action is delayed because only minorities appear to be under threat, when the popular press reacts hysterically and oppressively, when individuals begin calling for the incarceration and tattooing of Aids carriers, then the publication of this book is a timely reminder that there are other forms of 'pink triangle'. □

Jessie's bakery

Connie Bensley

This shop, something of a cult with local inhabitants for its delicious hot bread, was closed by the health authorities on the grounds that the flour was full of moths.

Blindfold, you could find it by the reek
of stale cats. Big Jessie queens it here, her grey hair
dollied up in yellow curls, six days a week.

It takes her years to talk your loaf into a bag.
The weather never tires of hearing about itself.
Flour stirs and settles; hours lag.

In fact, time stops. Flies, as if in amber,
stiffen in syrup tarts. Sultanas scab
the shelves; the customers half remember

the world, in its complexity and pain;
and, like the lotus eaters, grow averse
to facing it again.

CRIME

Guns and cash

Nick Kimberley

GEORGE V. HIGGINS IS ADAMANT that he's never written a crime novel. A crime novel, he has said in several interviews and articles, is about crime: how it's done and how it's punished, or not. His 14 novels are not about such details, but about the larger concerns of how people struggle in a world where moral duplicity is the best defence. He claims that pigeonholing his novels as *crime* is restricting not only his readership, but also his royalty statements.

I see Higgins' point. His first three novels, beginning with *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, were about criminals living seedily and counting themselves lucky if they survived. The crimes they perpetrated were mere devices to allow the author to plunge them in deep trouble; but, because of them, the books were seen as crime novels and all of Higgins' fiction since has been treated in the same way.

My sympathy notwithstanding, George finds himself once again relegated (some might say promoted) to this slot, simply because his latest novel **Outlaws** (Deutsch, £10.95) begins with a series of robberies. But of course felony is not the prime concern. The robberies, which begin in Massachusetts in 1970, are the means by which an angry group of revolutionists funds itself. Spanning several years, the crimes are increasingly well managed and productive, until finally mass murder ensues when some randy drug dealers are relieved of their cash and coke. Only information from a turncoat allows the police to catch the crooks. This betrayal is just one of many scattered throughout. It's perhaps not surprising that Higgins finds these hippy activists somewhat tarnished; their vision of revolution, and the robbery and violence they commit to achieve it, are misguided and bad-tempered. They're little more than the spoilt brats of well-to-do liberals whose moral sense failed to develop beyond the playpen.

If this were all Higgins had to say, *Outlaws* would be simply one more attempt to discredit Sixties idealism and the era's genuine political fervour. While the novel is no doubt partly that, it gains much from Higgins' conviction that what the youthful anger was directed against was indeed horribly corrupt. The politely wealthy who spawned these troublemakers are quite capable of equal crimes to preserve their family standing. Such insights aren't new, but they bring to Higgins' usual quizzically amused distance a real bitterness not always present in his earlier work. The novel's devices are familiar Higgins: courtoom scenes which are little more than excuses for the judge to make hilariously offensive asides; rambling conversations to tell what's already happened, rather than depicting the event itself; absolutely plain descriptions that might be from police reports.

All this is achieved with Higgins' usual skill. No writer uses dialogue so well to tell a complex story; few writers are as evenhanded in presenting the corruption and compromises of those with too

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much power, and those with too little.

The anger just beneath *Outlaws'* surface is something new for Higgins: while most of it is directed at American lives over the past 20 years, we Brits don't come out of it too well either, as Higgins sees us constructing a right-minded universe in which Neville Chamberlain's principles of appeasement still offer guidance. This is a substantial novel; I'm glad that a few robberies scattered across the opening pages have consigned it to this crime fiction roundup, where it may not quite belong.

A similar sense of the betrayal of Sixties radicalism permeates Hannah Wakefield's **The Price You Pay** (Women's Press, £9.95 & £4.95), which sticks more closely to conventional thriller format than Higgins. Wakefield is also less ambiguous than Higgins about that radicalism, which here embodies a commitment to genuine political change which *Outlaws* suggests was wild-eyed. For Wakefield, the commitment is so firm that it must be underlined: few chances are lost to digress on police brutality, CIA involvement in everything shabby, sexual politics — the full spectrum of contemporary radical concerns. These are pushed so far to the fore that an already complex plot, with many characters and even more leads and false trails, sometimes becomes impenetrable. But Wakefield has a sure sense of how to shift location, rearrange suspicion, plant clues. The first-person narrator also has a welcome touch of irony and self-deprecation which sees us through the plot's more difficult patches.

The feminist thriller — a sub-genre whose defining characteristics are still hazy — has been published, so far, by feminist publishing houses. Sooner or later, others were bound to catch on, and now have with Joan Smith's **A Masculine Ending** (Faber, £9.95).

The witty title suggests something learned, and this might be an Eighties version of the abstrusely rambling novels of Michael Innes: a familiarity with debates within feminism and about deconstruction will be an asset. Sadly, the novel lacks Innes' wit. Like many 'radical' thrillers, it has an unsubtle and restricted sense of how fiction works — as if your characters only needed to say the right things, listen to the right music (from Grace Jones to *Tosca*) for your credentials to become apparent. If that were the case, *A Masculine Ending* would have strongly reactionary overtones, as it suggests that homosexual passion is predatory and even murderous. Old stereotypes die hard.

The American crime novel has always allowed for intriguing regional variations, well displayed in the switches in, for example, Elmore Leonard's novels between Detroit, Miami and New Orleans. Britain has offered the crime novelist fewer options, but the first two novels by Frederic Lindsay, **Brond** (Corgi, £2.50) and **Jill Rips** (Deutsch, £9.95) join the Laidlaw novels of William McIlvanney in suggesting that Glasgow has much to offer in the way of tenebrous locations and shady ethics. Lindsay re-animates such clichés as the fearless Glaswegian toughie, the weatherworn cynic whose sardonic wit has seen it all, the self-righteous cop who's no better than he should be.

Fictional retreads such as these aren't always successful and Lindsay has a tendency to ellipsis which, intended to be poetic, undercuts the force of his language. But there's a genuine feeling that Lindsay knows how to use crime, character, language and location to extend the thriller's boundaries: these are deliberately political fictions which don't wear their convictions like a badge. *Jill Rips* has some uncomfortable things to say about sex, violence and financial corruption. If its claustrophobically male perspective only reiterates the alienation it wants to dispel, Lindsay still seems on the verge of something original. □

POETRY

The word forever

Geoff Dyer

Syrian-born Adonis writes of prophesy and politics — his voice a world away from the coolness of much contemporary poetry here

'LOST ANGEL of a ruined paradise' — Shelley, of course, from 'Adonais' But it's not just the coincidence of names that makes it appropriate to link Adonis, pen-name of Ali Ahmad Said, with the great elegy for Keats. English poetry at present tends to be inhibited by the demands of ingenious precision and oblique intricacy of expression. For Adonis, like Shelley, language is a medium of visions; he has 'learned to dwell between language and vision':

> I say now and again
> that poetry is the rose of all winds —
> not wind only, but tempests,
> not one circling but orbits, orbits.

Ali Ahmad Said, who'll be reading his work in London this weekend*, was born in Syria in 1930. He began writing in his twenties but, as a result of his literary and political activities, was imprisoned; then, in 1956, exiled to Beirut, where he became a naturalised Lebanese citizen. One of the most important figures in modern Arabic literature, his works of poetry and prose run into many volumes.

Here, however, translations of his poems are available only in two anthologies: Penguin's *Poetry of the Modern Arab World* and Al Saqi's *Victims of a Map*, the former edited and the latter translated by Abdullah al-Udhari.

The loss has been ours for he is another of those writers like Neruda and Marquez who have brought to the traditional forms of their native culture the galvanising energies and ambitions of European-American modernism. Out of this meeting of the modernist and the Islamic comes a poetry that has the quality of contemporary newscast and religious prophecy. His poem 'The Desert (Diary of Beirut under Siege, 1982)' is the most obvious example — but Beirut, ruined and surviving, is felt always in his work as the epicentre of world upheaval. From the blood of the mythical Adonis the anemone was said to have bloomed. Adonis himself writes in 'bleeding words', 'in blood' and 'in flames'; the blood of the Lebanon coagulates in his poems. Living there with the diurnal experience of loss and hope, the sense of Beirut as a tragic site of historical convergence for the Arab people has permeated to the heart of his work:

> I saw the Arab map.
> It resembled a mare shuffling on,
> dragging its history like saddlebags,
> nearing its tomb and the pitch of hell . . .

This knowledge charges and transforms even a simple lyric — 'The flower that tempted the wind to carry its perfume/Died yesterday' — while his longer poems sink a shaft deep into the century.

No single poem demonstrates this so abundantly as 'The Funeral of New York'. For Adonis, as the poem begins,

> New York is a woman
> holding, according to history,
> a rag called liberty with one hand
> and strangling the earth with the other.

Apocalyptic and relentless, his vision unfolds through frozen inflections of detail — 'The moon was an orange skin chucked from a window;/the sun, an orange neon' — and deep rhythmic surges: 'New York is a hole in the world's pouch/for madness to gush in torrents./Harlem, New York is dying, and you are the hour.' To Liberty's broken promise — 'Give me your tired, your poor,/Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free . . .' — the poet responds with the simple appeal of the dispossessed: 'Let our turn be now.' And then, again:

> Let our turn be now.
> Our book is on the rise,
> and it is not mere print
> but a prophecy that grows and grows . . .

Ending, characteristically, with a salute to Beirut, it is a poem of global stature, superbly translated by Samuel Hazo in a very limited American edition (*Transformations of the Lover*) but impossible to get hold of here.

In a recent book John Berger talks of the *promise* of poetry as residing in the fact 'that language has acknowledged, has given shelter, to the experience which demanded, which cried out'. Whereas in the past protest against social injustice tended to be in prose, he continues, now, more and more, it will be poetry that takes on board this task, for poetry 'speaks to the immediate wound' and 'is a form of prayer'. Moving as the expression of an ideal, these claims are often betrayed by the actual experience of poetry: think of Wendy Cope or Craig Raine and Berger sounds pretty daft. Adonis makes it possible to believe again in that ideal of poetry:

> Some say that words are dead,
> that action is everything.
> But I tell you that only their words are dead . . .
> The word, the lightest of things,
> is everything.
> Action is once.
> The word is forever. □

Adonis will be reading his poems in Arabic, followed by an English translation, at 8pm on Sunday 24 May at the Battersea Arts Centre. Tel: 01-223 2223.

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Give us a fine brush

Mike George, Centre for Alternative Industrial and Technological Strategies

Lionel Barber, in 'Making friends with fun financiers' (*NS* 1 May), started to lift the lid on how successfully company reporting is divorced from 'political' articles or pages, be it in the pop or quality press, or in journals of the left. You don't have to be an unreconstructed adherent of labourism to be concerned that 99 per cent of corporate management behaviour appears to be beyond comment or criticism.

Oh yes, we have the occasional *scandal*, be it Guinness, or Westland, but the very fact that these are scandals only shows that managerial behaviour of certain sorts actually starts to worry Tokyo or Wall Street or the Bank of England. In short, the exposés that hit the headlines from time to time represent behaviour that goes beyond the pale *in employers' and City terms*.

We don't just need the odd 'scandals' or — in the case of Nabisco closing its South London plant — broad critiques of the agri-food-business, but something that bites back at the saccharine statements so dutifullty reproduced in the press. Want to know why Britain is Ford's most profitable operation (and why cars are so expensive in this country)? Are you interested in how BT has reorganised operations since privatisation, why jobs are being lost and the service is deteriorating? Do people in Hackney want to know why Metal Box destroyed the last manufacturing jobs in that borough? Is it useful to debate the run-down of the oil and petrochemicals industry in Britain? Is it of *any* interest to know how the most profitable factory in a company was closed in West London, throwing hundreds of Asian workers out of a job? In short, have we really no interest in how and why managers and directors make decisions that affect millions of people, and hundreds of communities?

Over the next few weeks we'll be overrun by psephologists, but I'll look in vain for any significant economic debate about the *way* in which the real economy is managed.

No romance in Chelsea mob

Steve Redhead, Marple

Martin Ryle (*NS* 15 May) suggests that I present 'football thugs as the shock troops of the revolution'. I don't. As I stated in the introduction to *Sing When You're Winning*, what I wrote was a *satire* — savage, ironic, furious — on the bizarre representation of soccer culture in various media. Ray Lowry's superb cartoons, which help to illustrate the book, surely make this clear.

In more serious pieces (which have appeared in these pages as well as other journals such as *New Socialist* and *New Society*) I have explicitly pointed to the dangers of (both left and right) romanticisation of soccer violence. My purpose in writing the book was to inject some sanity into the 'politics of football' which at the time (the immediate aftermath of the horrific tragedies at Bradford and Brussels) was being commandeered by the radical right. Pluto's problems delayed the publication of the book, but even in the year since it was finished events have sadly proved my point.

Only this week, on the eve of a third term for a government which as yet hasn't even started on the use of football-style surveillance of shopping centres, tube stations, estates and so on, the media pantomime continued. Coverage of the trial of the 'Chelsea Mob' has treated us to the 'surprise' that clean cut, well dressed young men who were tee-total could be running England's most notorious football crew *and* predicted that such undercover police operations would soon have solved the problem of English soccer violence once and for all. My book was written to alert a wider public to the mischief of such myth-making and to begin a debate — which the spread of football fanzines since 1985 symbolises — on how to make football *not* an 'escape from politics' but central to it.

Kiwi disease

Sue Rawson, Auckland, New Zealand

When New Zealand first announced its anti-nuclear policy, we were heartened and immensely encouraged by the huge international response which gave us great hope that we might indeed infect the world with the 'kiwi disease'.

During the past three years, we have maintained our anti-nuclear policy and it is now about to be enshrined in New Zealand law. However, it seems that the world may well not be aware of the numerous pressures which are being applied to our government by the nuclear superpowers to persuade us to back down. The most well-known attempt was made by the French when they blew up the *Rainbow Warrior* in Auckland harbour. This terrorist attack was deemed 'as different as chalk from cheese' from other acts of terrorism by Sir Geoffrey Howe, presumably because it was done by an ally in the Western Alliance.

Since 1984, we have had a plethora of visits from American pro-nuclear officials. Many journalists, prominent MPs and policy makers have been on courtesy trips to the US.

It is no coincidence that there has been a rise in activity of the moral majority and this has recently culminated in the expensive evangelical crusade by Luis Palau gathering the pro-nuclear to the nuclear fold. Ex-military top officials from New Zealand have used every opportunity, including our Poppy Day memorial service, to criticise our government's anti-nuclear stance.

And then Sir Geoffrey Howe arrived to put us on the right track. I heard him utter veiled threats that the nuclear ships ban would jeopardise our dairy products access in Europe.

Three-horse race

Frank McManus, Press Officer, Calder Valley Constituency Labour Party

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call. The Tories had a 9,000 majority in 1983 but have fallen apart as in a number of ex-textile areas, so that Labour led in the ITV polls of October 1986 and March 1987, as in the 1986 Council results. The media have *misreported* 7 May 1987 as 'Tory 35 per cent, Liberal 35 per cent, Labour 30 per cent', because they have excluded from their reckoning the votes polled by an Independent Socialist who broke from the Labour Party in 1985 through his refusal to accept the Council whip on maintaining 'green belts' — clearly not a national issue, nor 'right versus left'.

This year's totals for the nine Calder Valley wards are Tory 12,490 (34.1 per cent), Liberal 12,865 (33.9 per cent), Labour 10,980 (29.0 per cent), Independent Socialist 1,151 (3.0 per cent) — i.e. total socialist 32.0 per cent. Furthermore, Labour on this occasion had no councillors seeking re-election, as against two Tory and three Liberals — and these people as a rule take into the polls a personal following of some 200 votes as a consequence of casework undertaken. Thus Calder Valley is a wide-open three-horse race.

Fairy, fairy? Quite contrary

Paul Wilson, Colne, Lancs.

It makes as much sense to say, as John Brosnan does (Letters 15 May), that Angela Carter writes horror fiction as it does to claim that she writes fairy stories. She does neither: she might use the Dracula story, or Little Red Riding Hood, but she proceeds to subvert them, deconstructs them, to use the jargon. Most of the 'mainstream' writers I cited (Letters 24 April) do the same: Alasdair Grey draws on the fantasy genre in *Lanark*; *The Tin Drum* and *The Flounder* are similarly 'fantastic'; and Rushdie's *Shame* has a strong 'horror' element. But, while they may use elements of genre fiction, they are unconstrained by the conventions of the 'horror' or 'fantasy' novel, producing genuinely subversive fictions.

I can't comment on Knight's *The Fungus*, not having read it, but at first sight the notion of a monetarist fungus seems pretty banal; indeed, it could well be preferable to the real thing. For a genuinely harrowing account of how people try to build their lives amidst the rot of Thatcher's Britain, turn to James Kelman's *The Busconductor Hines*. Horrible, funny, moving: a portrait of ordinary lives more profoundly effective than any genre fiction could ever be.

Young, liberal and back

Andy Reynolds, Political Vice Chair, National League of Young Liberals, Norwich

Your series on 'the realignment of the left' was very interesting and thought-provoking (*NS* 8 May), but the description of Felix Dodds as 'until last month chair of the Young Liberals' is incorrect. A presidential ruling declared all the contested Young Liberals elections null and void, due to a number of 'disturbing electoral irregularities'. Therefore, in accordance with the law of the land, the Chair of the Young Liberals reverts back to the previous chair. So, effectively, Mr Dodds is still at the helm of the Young Liberals' and in a very influential position.

It would be interesting to be a fly on the wall when David Steel finds out that Mr Dodds, the paragon of 'radicalism' in the Liberal Party, is running the Young Liberals during the general election, rather than the newly 'elected chair', Ms Rachael Pitchford, whose political leaning is aptly illustrated by her ambition to become 'a Norfolk MP'.

Finally the Felix Dodds comeback throws up one more interesting question. Will the Young Liberals now enact their policy for the general election and put Chris Smith (Lab. Islington S) firmly and publicly on their target seat list in the general election? The new executive effectively killed this contentious piece of policy, but Mr Dodds is likely to go full steam ahead.

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FRIENDLY, INTELLIGENT woman 39, seeks caring man, 35-45 to share sense of humour, discussions, fun, and perhaps a long-term relationship? My interests include: photography, theatre, cinema, walks and working with people. London area. Box (21)4964. W21.6

GLASGOW MAN, late twenties, seeks bright woman to share meaningful discussions, light chit-chat, wining, dining, love of music, cinema, theatre, friendship and perhaps lasting partnership. Box (21)4960. W21.7

HAMPSHIRE: ROMANTIC male (34), professional, single, socialist, non-smoker, into films, rock music and countryside, seeks similar woman for friendship and hopefully a lot more. Box (21)4965. W21.8

LADY: attractive, intelligent, warm, witty, feminine, unattached, enjoys most things, would appreciate meeting compatible, unattached man, 40-50. London/Home Counties. Box (21)4959. W21.9

LADY, ATTRACTIVE, intelligent, independent mind and means, seeks similar man 40-50. Devon-Cornwall only. Loves: art, books, history, music, cooking, DIY. Photo, phone no. please. Box (21)4988. W21.10

LEFTISH LECTURER (35), tall, divorced and new to Sheffield, seeks intelligent female to share some interests including music, cinema, walking, sciences, food. Box (21)4983. W21.11

MALE-MID FIFTIES, London NW3, seeks female companion for walks on the Heath and occasional visits to cinema. Interests: literature, nature, mysticism. Box (21)4963. W21.12

OLD FRIENDS: an introduction agency for the over forties. Loneliness is not inevitable. Details from: Anne Brent, 18a Highbury New Park, London N5 2DB. 01-226 5432. N15.31

ONE WARM WOMAN sought by musing male (38), Manchester area, recently separated, interests include: theatre, food, walking, pottery, politics. Fancy an Indian meal, summer days in the Dales, or even long-term love? Box (21)4976. W21.13

PROFESSIONAL MALE, 5' 11", (not left-wing), unattached, seeks slim, attractive woman, 30-42, with interest in theatre, classical music, walking, countryside, travel. West London/Home Counties. Box (21)4962. W21.14

PROFESSIONAL MAN, 30, author, PhD, seeks thoughtful, sensuous woman to share joy of friendship, love, conversation, music, travel. London based can travel. Box (21)4969. W21.15

REASONABLY ATTRACTIVE author (solvent!) seeks committed relationship with warm, lively, unattached woman (50+) living or working central London. Telephone talks — then meetings? Please write for details, photograph. Box (21)4985. W21.16

RELAXED, PLEASANT guy, young looking 55, fit, warm personality, good sense of humour, not broke, job, flat, car, seeking slim, stylish lady, mid-30s to mid-40s, who shares his interest in theatre, music, art, social awareness, left politics, and who wants long-term relationship. Photo appreciated, mine returned. London based. Box (21)4984. W21.17

ROMANTIC ENGLISHMAN, 32, graduate, professional, late starter, unattached, seeks sensitive, warm-hearted female interested in music, literature, philosophy, travel naturism, inner harmony for close relationship. Box (21)4961. W21.18

SINGLE LADY, 32, unconventional, shy, reflective, sincere, left-wing, seeks gentle, generous-spirited man, with sense of humour and goodwill. Likes: music, nature. Yorks. Box (21)4980. W21.20

SENSITIVE, SEPARATED father, 34, committed to honest relationships — seeks warm female friends — hoping one will become special. Interests: fell-walking, music (especially folk), development issues, yours might be different! Tyneside/Northumberland/NW. Box (21)4972. W21.19

SOCIALIST WEST Yorks male, 37, enjoying books, music, socialising, walks, summer, seeks woman with similar tastes and values, for sharing, caring relationship. Box (21)4971. W21.21

SUCCESSFUL MALE, academic, professional, 36, mildly though pleasantly eccentric with diverse interests, weary of doctrinaire damsels, seeks intellectually sophisticated, socially adroit, physically aware woman. Box (21)4973. W21.22

TO HELL with elections! Meet someone new and enjoy yourself. Contact: Flora Handley for introductions to thinkers who do. Tel. 01-509 2690 or write to: The Odyssey Bookshop, 30 Lambs Conduit Street, London WC1. W21.23

WARM, ATTRACTIVE, feminine Manchester lady, seeks attractive, intelligent, sensitive, humorous man, 30-38, into music, films, books, life, wine, sun, fun, for caring relationship. Box (21)4986. W21.24

WARM, HAPPY woman, non-smoking, wine drinking, veggy, likes: cinema, pop music, serious theatre, poetry, pottery & paintings, environmentally concerned — would like to share some of these things with man, late 30s-40s. Norfolk. Box (21)4966. W21.25

WARM, INFORMAL Sussex woman — seeks affectionate, intelligent man, 34+, similar interests gardening, crafts, good conversation, humour, books, music, NS interests. Photo appreciated. Box (20)4951. W20.24

WARM, THOUGHTFUL woman, 32, caring profession — enjoys: people, communication, walking, travel, the arts — seeks sensitive, open, intelligent man for enjoyable relationship. Oxford area. Box (21)4979. W21.26

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PUTNEY: furnished flat for couple, up to 9 months from 7 June. £120 p.w. Tel. 01-789 6030. W21.2

PURSUITS

FEMALE GRADUATE; London; planning early retirement (to Yorkshire Dales?), with funds for starting small campsite or similar venture, invites partners and/or ideas. Box (21)4989. W21.3

MEETINGS

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for pamphlet, book list, programme. Free talks or discussions, Sundays 8-9pm ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL. N40.6

CONFERENCE

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BILLBOARD

Enquiries: Laura Berryman 01-739 1645

Theatre

NATIONAL THEATRE 01-928 2252 Olivier (open stage) **A SMALL FAMILY BUSINESS, SIX CHARACTERS IN SEARCH OF AN AUTHOR & KING LEAR.** Lyttelton (proscenium stage) **SCHOOL FOR WIVES & TONS OF MONEY.** Cottesloe (small auditorium) **THREE MEN ON A HORSE.** See daily press for dates and times or ring recorded information 01-928 2256.

BLOOMSBURY THEATRE 01-387 9629. 22 & 23 May 8pm **CLIVE GREGSON AND CHRISTINE COLLISTER** in concert. Sat 23 May at noon **HAMLET** (film in Russian) 26 May 7.30pm **UCL Spanish Dept JUSTICE WITHOUT REVENGE.** 27-30 May 8pm **5TH ANNUAL SAXAPHONE FESTIVAL.**

AGENDA

FOR DETAILS CALL JANET BANKS 01-739 1645

Deadline: 2pm Mondays

SAT 23 MAY

ABORTION LAW REFORM ASSOCIATION: A Woman's Right to Choose Campaign is holding a Public Meeting & Political Forum on 'Choice in the Eighties' at 2 p.m. Mary Ward Club, Coram's Fields, Guilford St, London WC1 (2 mins Russell Sq. tube). Speakers include: Alison Frater Gen. Sec. Brook Advisory Centres, Jo Richardson MP — Labour Party, Sue Slipman — SDP/Liberal Alliance. Adm; (to cover room hire) £1.50 waged, 50p unwaged. Further info contact: ALRA, 88 Islington High St, London N1 8EG. Tel. 01-359 5200.

MON 25 MAY

MORNING STAR "Festival For All" celebrating **Seventy Years of Progress, 1917-1987.** Bank Holiday Monday, **10.30a.m. to 6p.m., Alexandra Palace, London, N22.** Top entertainment, exhibitions, stalls, refreshments, bar. Political rally, 3.45, with international speakers. **Admission £4, unwaged £2, under 5's free.** Creche and disabled access.

CAMPAIGN

DEPRESSED BY THE OPINION POLLS?

Tactical voting can deny the Thatcher Government a third term. **Help TV 87** to inform voters **(Alliance & Labour)** how to make **their votes count.** Send donation to **Tactical Voting, 61 Sotheby Road, London N5 2UP.**

(Send SAE for information about campaign or ring **01-354 0823).**

TUES 26 MAY

MEETING ON DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS. (Should children be segregated on the basis of race, sex & religion), 7p.m. at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Speakers: Edward Blishen, G. N. Deodhekar (NSS), N. Kalia (Hindu Teachers Assn) & Robert Tutton (British Humanist Assn).

FRI 29 MAY

SHAW SOCIETY. Benny Green & Toni Kanaf on 'Shaw and the Actresses', at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn. Coffee 6.30 p.m. Meeting 7 p.m..

SAT 13 JUNE

THE AFTERMATH OF DISASTER: SURVIVAL & LOSS. Tavistock Clinic, 120 Belsize Lane, NW3. Tickets £10 in advance. Multi-disciplinary One-Day Conference; distinguished speakers; group discussion. Details: Jocelyn Gamble 01-435 7111.

JOIN SOCIALIST EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

(Affiliated to the *Labour Party*)
Membership: **£7 individual; £10 couples**
Write now to:
SEA, 110 Humberstone Road, London E13 9NJ.

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BACKCHAT

INFRA DIG

Your health

Diana Eden

A COUPLE OF YEARS ago I was ambling down the Strand, for once minding no one's business but my own, when there weaved towards me through the bustling crowd a parade of jolly medics. Some of them jackanapesed along the pavement pushing a waggish 'patient' on a battered hospital bed, while others rattled coin-filled specimen bottles and smiled the determined, pointed smiles of those who want you to part company with your money on an entirely voluntary basis.

This merrie band of revellers were students from St Thomas's on the South Bank of the Thames and they had wisely ventured forth across the river to collect for charity — London being one of the few locations in our nation where the real wealth is still to be found lurking in the north. Their cause was, without question, worthy. It was donations towards a baby unit they were after and, my childhood having been much enhanced by Richard Gordon's 'Doctor' romps and my adulthood having been similarly enriched by babies, coin of the realm — I fobbed off ne'er a single button nor Irish shilling — quickly left my hand.

Only the most unspeakable curmudgeon could ever find it in their heart to take issue with an enjoyable and altruistic episode like this. I found it. While contributing to the proferred specimen bottle (and scoring, possibly for the first time in medical history, an immediate, fluent hit) I cross-examined the white-coated lad engaged in eagerly analysing the level of its contents. Did he not, I wondered, find it little short of scandalous that he and his companions were forced to caper through the streets in an attempt to fund facilities which any caring government would make it its priority to provide.

The hapless youth committed the error of unreserved agreement — whereupon, warming to my theme and the sound of my voice theming, I delivered a pat and bitter homily on the party currently in power and the national lack of health. With the courteous resignation of one who finds himself under siege from an elderly, dotty aunt he cut me short: 'I'm with you love; say all this to *them*.' Traitorously, he indicated his cohorts gambolling on ahead. 'Every *one* of them votes Tory!' And there the doctor left me, apoplectic, high of blood pressure and gobsmacked in the Strand.

Was it possible that a group of bright young things, blessed with grey matter enough to pass their Physics 'A' Levels, remained unable to diagnose the cause and symptoms of a sick health service? Could they observe the massive tailback in the queue for beds and operations and yet not be moved to bring about a cure?

These sorry speculations have, alas, an update. Two weeks ago Peter Kellner drew our attention to the April Harris Poll which showed that no less than 77 per cent of British punters felt that the Health Service would improve by dint of a Labour win. That very same week found me contributing to a coin-filled specimen bottle at Victoria Station held by a smiling student from St Thomas's on the South Bank and, yes, it was funds towards a baby unit she was after. This time more in sorrow than in anger I asked in which direction she intended to cast her vote. With an evocative, courteous resignation, the bottle-bearer shrugged. 'I don't think I'm going to bother to vote at all!' I wished her a warm good-day and lifelong, robust health. □

'It'll revolutionise our lives.'

FIRST PERSON

Enemies of the state

Mark Huband

'IN THIS COUNTRY never trust a kaffir. They'll always let you down,' said my friend's South African-born wife as she stormed through the living-room the morning after I had arrived in Vereeniging. The black maid had failed to turn up and there was a coffee morning to organise.

I had last seen my friend ten years before. We were both 13 when he and his family left Harlow New Town for South Africa.

By 11a.m. the maid still had not arrived and the small bungalow, an hour's drive from Johannesburg, was filled with young mothers holding up their children for inspection as they sipped coffee and pondered the selection of biscuits. A short drive away, at the illegal squatter camp of Mushenguville on the outskirts of Soweto, 400 families were watching bulldozers tear down the shacks which had taken them months to save up for. (Next day, a newspaper report of the demolition would explain that it was usual for this kind of thing to take place in the morning; the men being at work then, violent protest was unlikely.)

The young mothers in Vereeniging began to gather their children together and haul their prams out into the quiet street. At Mushenguville, women of the same age sorted through the wreckage of what had once been their homes.

I asked my friend what he thought of this taking place in the country he had made his own.

'Well, you know,' he said, in a drawl which came and went depending on whether he was talking about South Africa or England, 'they know they shouldn't be there. I mean squatting is illegal in any country, even in England. They knew if they built their houses there they would have problems with the authorities sooner or later.

'What happens if you get a load of squatters together?' he continued. 'There's a problem of security, isn't there. I mean you've read about the violence in the townships. Any more people and there are bound to be more problems.'

Persisting in this *let's face the facts* kind of argument is clearly the standard way of avoiding confrontation with the real issues. Similarly, protection from foreign criticism is provided by the availability of examples of reform. P.W. Botha's reforms are a sign that the country *is* changing, it is claimed. For most whites, however, what is actually being changed remains hidden from view — by the system itself. So, who really knows whether the reforms are adequate or not? As long as the propaganda machine keeps the whites ignorant of the reality, there are enough lines of argument to convince people such as those I stayed with that they are not censoring themselves into oblivion, but are in fact facing the reality.

Next day we went for supper at my friend's parents' plush bungalow. The cramped Harlow housing estate they had left behind was a distant

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memory, but they moved rather awkwardly through the gentrified suburb the Group Areas Act allowed them to inhabit, aware that I had seen them in their past life.

'This is my country now,' said my friend's mother. 'I could never go back to England. It's too cold.' I wondered how many people there were keeping apartheid alive simply because they enjoyed the South African weather. 'We went back for a holiday, but we didn't like it at all.' She turned to her husband.

'I think the pace of life in South Africa suits us much better,' he said, sourly, without looking up. The swimming pool, the drinks bar and the maid they delighted in calling the *kaffirmatic* — all these were part of the dream home which allowed them to forget the past I reminded them of.

One set of grandparents had also been living with them, though they were now returning to Walthamstow since the grandfather had lost his job as a security guard. He complained about the immigrants in England who would, he said, hamper his search for a new job there. A recent immigrant himself, he ignored the fact that his coming to South Africa might well have served to increase that country's black unemployment — had consigned a potential black security guard to the illegal squatter camps, which appear because of the search for work near the cities.

My friend and I looked through some old photographs taken during his last week at school. I remembered the face of his younger brother as a first-year wandering rather lost through our large comprehensive.

'You wouldn't believe the change in him since he joined the army,' I was assured. 'He's 18 now. Seen a lot of action in Angola and South-West [Namibia]. For him, you know, the only good kaffir's a dead kaffir.' They all laughed, while his mother explained to me what a kaffir is.

While the young whites fight battles, young blacks lie in prison. A Methodist minister told me that there are around 2,000 detainees below the age of 18 being held under the state-of-emergency regulations. Even government sources say that 281 are under 14 and that some are as young as 12. Two of the minister's own children had been detained and one — aged 15 — had been tortured.

'Even though in England they might be seen as children,' said my friend when I confronted him with this, 'I see them as enemies of the state. You know, anyone who is old enough to throw a stone is an enemy of the state.' We looked at each other in silence. His four-year-old daughter came in to the room. Even he did not seem quite able to believe the truth could be twisted that far. □

FOOD

Eastern promise

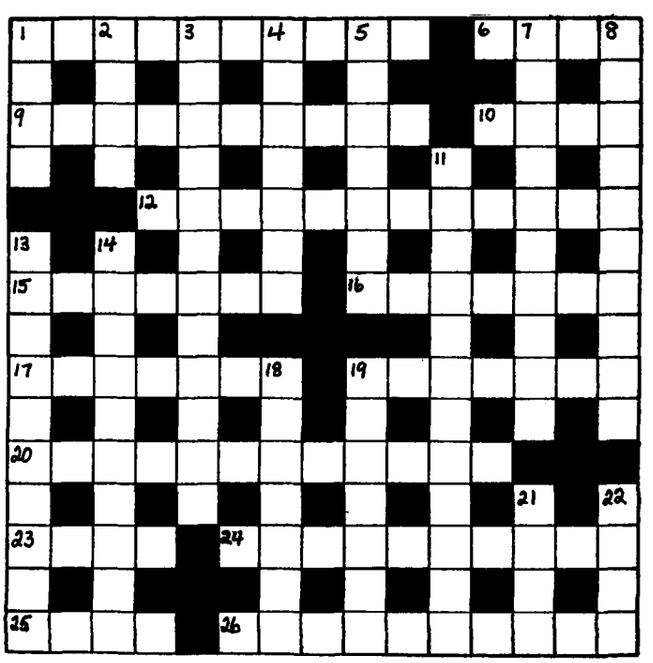
Colin Spencer

SUFFOLK HAS its devotees, especially in the summer when the 'melancholy long withdrawing roar' of Matthew Arnold's North Sea can draw the traveller towards the coast. One of its prettiest pubs/restaurants, which has an enthusiastic local following, is **The White Horse** at Easton. Emphasis is, as it should be, on good local produce: Cromer crab, sole from Lowestoft, cod from Aldeburgh. There are excellent steaks from a local Wickham Market butcher, where the meat is properly hung, and a small wine list with some highly delicious clarets on it. A three-course dinner costs just under £13 per head but the bar snacks, which are of a similar high quality, are cheaper. My only carp is that the gulls' eggs came shelled and with a salad; they should be served, like quails' eggs, *au naturel* with celery or sesame salt. The guide-books all talk of the aviary in the pub's grounds but wildlife has made a meal of most of the birds and now there is only a lonely Lady Amherst's pheasant to ponder on the red tooth and claw of nature.

Not far from Easton, towards the sea on the other side of the A12, is Campsea Ashe. Stewart Bassett cooks at the **Old Rectory** which won the *Good Food Guide* award for best Suffolk restaurant this year and, because of that, is worth a visit. But, be warned, it is a strange establishment: a private house beautifully furnished with antique rugs, mirrors and *objets d'art*. The magazines of the upper crust lie upon embroidered stools. The smells are of beeswax and jasmine with, if you sniff hard, a subliminal garlic and claret. When you make the telephone booking, you chat with Mr Bassett and he chooses the menu and the wines

Weekend Crossword 1558

£3 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1558, New Statesman, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8BA, by first post 5 June.



Name_____

Address_____

_____

ACROSS

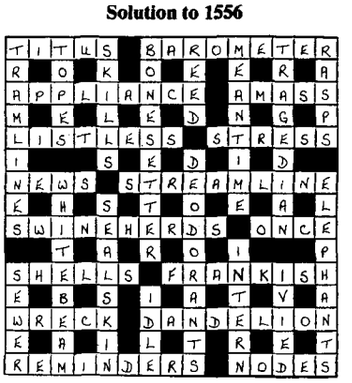
1. Plan to try again for a drink (10)
6. Thanks for the account of what happened? (4)
9. If the city were rebuilt it could be more spoilt (10)
10. If a man came round, he would be a foreigner (4)
12. Indoor servants avail themselves of food taken in by gardeners (12)
15. Comes out from them before desires are heard (7)
16. Brighter girl embraced by the more impolite (7)
17. Drove freely holding an iron after a substantial meal (7)
19. They work in a French island surrounded by mountains (7)
20. Make a change of direction, turning me into a piece of music (12)
23. He is useful for a Londoner (4)
24. It takes a singer to win a girl completely (10)
25. Times are bewildering, by the sound of it (4)
26. Youngster has trouble with the French perfume (10)

DOWN

1. There is time among reds for temporary accommodation (4)
2. Hard workers in county without capital (4)
3. Street in which you can get hot mash and plain food (12)
4. They put themselves first so one gets confused (7)
5. Dogged type often seen with Bill (7)
7. The religious have worries about me burning (10)
8. Member of an older generation puts emphasis on use of cane (10)
11. Improperly desires maths teacher (12)
13. Used to support the worker (10)
14. Eddy is involved with wild revels, having earned it (10)
18. Bored at being on parade (7)
19. The plant would have to work if the arbitrator were dismissed (7)
21. A woman with nothing inside her needs something to put on (4)
22. Pace which is the reverse of wrong (4)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1556



Prizewinners to 1556

C. J. Kitchen (Ayr)
P. Collins (London SE5)
Kenneth Edinborough (Colchester, Essex)

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for you — a bit high handed, you may think, but that is the name of the Bassett game.

The main dining room has a baronial table where you could seat a small private army. There is another dining room with only three large tables in it. I ate a brill stuffed with a crab mousse which was disappointingly bland. Brill, in my opinion, is a splendid fish which should never be fiddled with. Like Dover sole, it is best plainly grilled with a herb butter. Crab is best cold; hot, it loses much of its flavour. So the first course, for me, was not well-judged. The main course was a saddle of hare, nicely pink and beautifully tender. Here, Mr Bassett retrieved his lost points. But a noisy party of Americans in the small room, who were debating the relative qualities of UK and US television, destroyed all the pleasure. This is a restaurant for foodie eccentrics or those who feel entirely at home in the pages of *Country Life*.

Up the A12 a little further, but two centuries away in concept and ingredients, is **Eliza Acton** at Yoxford — a pleasant, unspoilt village between Blythburgh and Aldeburgh. Here, in a small room nearly always packed to the beams, is Elizabeth Acton's place, where the dishes range from smoked mackerel mousse to sausages and chips and vegetable samosas. The food is thoroughly good nosh at amazing value. You can choose to eat plebean or more fastidiously. When I was there, there was a most delicious parsnip purée among the side vegetables and the chicken pâté was homemade, smooth as double cream but with a tinge of juniper berries. You can eat three courses for under a fiver.

Back towards Aldeburgh, at Snape, there is another local favourite, **The Golden Key**, a pub which sells Adnams ales and is always packed with people wanting its food. Sue Kissock-Jones cooks crumbly quiches, never overloaded with milk, cream, cheese or eggs, but with a nice balance of either asparagus, spinach, mushrooms or smoked haddock. Her sausage, onion and egg roll is a great favourite, as well as her individual shepherds pies and steak and kidney pies.

For my money, however, the best place in the area, the one with the most delectable food at the most reasonable price, is Sally O'Gorman and Richard Lane's **Wine Bar** at Woodbridge. It's not much to look at and the kitchen is tiny with an ancient gas stove but it is there that miracles occur. Delicate moulds of asparagus and lime, small roulades of mushroom and feta, nutty salads of brown lentils, spring vegetables steamed for a second, edible flowers and herbs in every salad. There are casseroles of game and spiced pork, oatmealed herring and monk fish with ginger. There are disgustingly rich chocolate parfaits and cheesecakes. Everything is fresh, local and cooked to order. If they can provide high class gourmet food at a reasonable price of £8 for three courses, why can't more places? □

White Horse, Easton, nr Wickham Market, Suffolk; tel: Wickham Market 746456

The Old Rectory, Campsea Ashe, Woodbridge, Suffolk; tel: Wickham Market 746524

Eliza Action Restaurant, Old High Road, Yoxford, Suffolk; tel: Yoxford 637

Golden Key, Priory Road, Snape, Suffolk; tel: Snape 510

Wine Bar, 17 Thoroughfare, Woodbridge, Suffolk; tel: Woodbridge 2557

Weekend competition

No 2976 **Set by Gray Dorn**

Another political one, I'm afraid. Never mind, only a month to go and then you can get back to writing Spoonerisms on dead poets till they take us all off to the camps. Last week's *NS* contained 100 reasons for not voting Tory: too easy — what we want now is one good reason *for* voting Tory. One *really good* reason, in a sentence, or up to 150 words. And, because of our special early election week issue, we'll need them by Tuesday 2 June.

No 2973 **Set by Margaret Rogers**

Verse laments from opinion pollsters or pollees.

Report **By Gray Dorn**

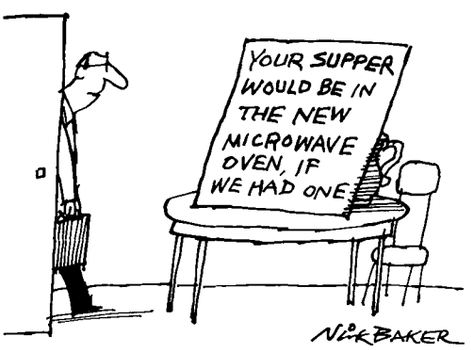
These were inspired, and I wish we could print them all, if only to show how a cross-section of the population, from every region, age and class — judging from your names, styles, addresses and my prejudices — believe opinion polls aren't worth a toss. Too bad we're going to hear about precious little else for the next few weeks. If you want to count me, count me out, as the song used to go. One of the West German Greens' more imaginative campaigns has been against the national census: is there still time to persuade everyone here to tell pollsters the best lie that enters their head? Probably not; in any case I'm off to Greece now, before they seal the borders on 13 June. (Actually, doncha get really *sick* of people saying they're going to emigrate, especially when it's always the ones you *know* are actually going to drift off into the SDP or the Moonies when it's all over . . .). £10 each, for ammunition or drugs, according to taste.

How They Brought the News to Party HQs

Maggie and Neil and the Lib/SDP —
She Galluped, he Galluped, they Galluped all three,
All of them thinking they had what it takes
To Gallup home first in the Grand National Stakes,
While thousands of voters, committed and floating,
Were asked by the pollsters which way they were voting;

But whenever a maiden with clip-board I see,
A Cloud of Unknowing descends upon me,
And I tell her that, not being gifted with prescience,
I exist in a state of perpetual nescience,
To put it another way (if I may dare),
I don't bloody know and I don't bloody care.

STANLEY J. SHARPLESS



Should Margaret Thatcher rule OK?
Would Kinnock mean a better show?
And will the Davids win the day
For moderation? I don't know.

When pollsters importune, I pass.
I don't believe in politics.
I watch TV, I cut the grass,
I eat a daily Weetabix.

My brain hurts when the questions land
Upon my unprotected head.
I am a British voter — bland,
Inert, and intellectually dead.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

I'm a grief-stricken pollster,
I walk up and down,
In the cold, rainy streets,
Of this horrible town.

I've a handful of questions,
They've told me to ask.
Oh, why did I take on,
This wearisome task.

What on earth is the use,
Asking how, why, or what?
They're most of them lying,
As likely as not.

JOHN STANLEY

I'm a socialist tactical pollee
Who tells many tactical lies.
By praising up Thatcher
I'm hoping to catch her
In false optimistic surmise.
If she goes for an early election
Because she is well up the poll
I'm hoping she's doomed to rejection
By liars like me on the dole.

GERRY HAMILL

I don't give a toss
Where Joe Soap puts his cross
On the day of the General Election.
For Maggie or Neil
Or Owen or Steele
I feel not the slightest affection.

I've had up to here
Pollsters bending my ear,
So I say with all possible deference,
No use asking me
Who I want for MP
I'm a pissed-off pollee with no preference.

ROBERT BAIRD

They telephone you when you're on the bog,
Or washing the dog,
Or knock when you're in bed giving of your best —
Pollsters are a pest.

MAY DAY

It was an eager pollster
Who once more stoppeth me
'By thy papermate and clipboard
I am weary, let me be'.

'The Cap and Bells is open
My throat is dry as sin,
Three times your kind have probed my mind
Step back and let me in'.

He stood his ground, I shot him,
A pollster in his prime
Who, dying, croaked a question,
'What's your attitude to crime?'

PHILIP A. NICHOLSON

Incorporating 'The Nation', 'The Athenaeum' and 'The Week-end Review'. Registered as a newspaper. Typesetting by Tocatta Graphics, Tabard House, London SE1
Printed by BPCC Colchester Web Offset Ltd, Sheepen Place, Colchester CO3 3LJ (Tel. 577881), a member company of BPCC Printing Corporation plc.
Published by The Statesman & Nation Publishing Co. Ltd at Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8BA.

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Take me to your Leader
by Maanin' Minnie
TITUS BLURB IS SUFFERING FROM ROCKET LAG
RRRING RRRING
WUH···??·· WHO ON EARTH WOULD WANT TO DISTURB ME···??
22·5
HELLO THERE!
HERE!
The time has come
ARE YOU DISMAYED BY BRITAIN'S DECLINE INTO DEPRIVATION AND DESTITUTION?
DISAFFECTED?
DISILLUSIONED?
DO YOU DEEPLY DESIRE DECENTRALISATION? EVEN DEVOLUTION?
IS THERE A DEARTH OF DAVIDS IN YOUR LIFE?
NO TIME FOR DEBATE— CAN'T DELAY— MUST DEPART
DUE IN DUNDEE AND DUBLIN
THESE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES TURN UP IN THE UNLIKELIEST CORNERS OF THE UNIVERSE
JOHN MINNION

Chess

ANY NEW NAMES to note? Stars of the 90s? Or just some that don't begin with a 'K' for a change! Well, several of the leading finishers in the last USSR championship (4-29 March in Minsk) are more or less unknown outside the Soviet Union. Valery Salov, who tied with Beliavsky for first place, would have to be rated the leading prospect. But there are doubts about how far he can go, especially as he's only one year younger than Kasparov. (It's Salov's 23rd birthday next Tuesday.) Besides, I thought that Beliavsky, a seasoned 36-year-old, played much the best chess in Minsk. Looking through the games, I thought that an overall stylistic change could be detected. Double-edged systems with clear-cut strategies seemed less popular, hence fewer King's Indians. The Sicilian Defence was also in decline, with more Blacks opting for the French. And some games were just messy. In the case of the following specimen, though I shun the epithet 'irregular' with its overtones of impropriety, I can't think of any classification that applies.

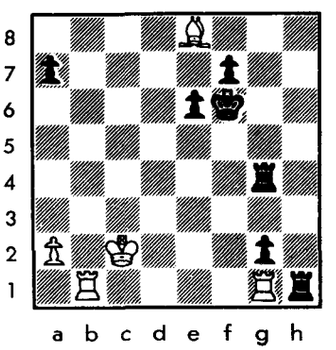
Salov—Yusupov, Minsk 1987.
1. Nf3 d5 2. c4 e6 3. g3 g6 4. Bg2 Bg7 5. d4 Ne7 6. Nc3 Nbc6 7. cxd5 exd5 8. Bf4 Be6 9. h3 h6 10. Nb5 Rc8 11. Qa4 g5 12. Be3 Qd7 13. Rd1 0-0 14. Nc3 Rcd8 15. Bc1 Ng6 16. e3 Rfe8 Both sides seem to have come out of this curious opening badly. White has wasted time with his QN and QB and can't castle because the pawn on h3 would hang. For the moment Black has less to complain about, having castled and being ahead in development. But his Q-side formation is poor — he should have a pawn, not a Knight, on c6. **17. Kf1 f5 18. h4** Salov didn't have much choice here, since otherwise . . . f5-f4 would be strong. But now why not 18 . . . g4 19. Ne1 f4! 20. gxf4 h5, followed by rounding up the stray pawn on h4? Instead White gets the gift of an open h-file and the game starts to swing his way. **Bf6? 19. hxg5 hxg5 20. Rh5 Qe7 21. Qb5!** This exposes the weakness of Black's Q-side, and he has to make major concessions to avoid shedding pawns. **g4 22. Ne1 Qb4 23. Nd3 Qxb5 24. Nxb5 Re7 25. Nc5 Kf7** With the defences under strain like this one should be on the look-out for a tactical finish. **26. Nxc7! Nf8** The theme was a concealed fork: 26 . . . Rxc7 27. Rh7+ Bg7 28. Rxg7+ Kxg7 29. Nxe6+ and Nxc7. **27. N5xe6 Nxe6 28. Nxd5 1-0.**

Of British players who are making progress, we should note that William Watson and Tony Kosten are well on the way to grandmaster titles, having both notched up a couple of GM norms in recent months. But the highest hopes must lie with the juniors. Last summer Cornish schoolboy Michael Adams displayed a calm, mature style in scoring IM results in both the British championship and the Lloyds Bank Masters. Still only 15, he is at the moment playing in the world under-16 championship in Graz. Before leaving he confirmed his great potential by winning the British Chess Federation's under-21 squad championship — for the second year running, and ahead of such 'senior juniors' as IMs Conquest, Howell and McDonald.

Yet in the quest for a British world chess champion even the mid-teens may be too far from the cradle for optimum talent-spotting, and the BCF, with the help of sponsorship from Lloyds Bank, seem to organise invitation tournaments for younger age-groups each year. Would you believe, they even have a squad championship for under-7s! Surely one can't delve any younger than that for chess proficiency? Here is a game by the under-11 winner. I wonder how it compares with the standard in the Palaces of Young Pioneers.

G. Twyford—S. Ansell, BCF/Lloyds Bank under-11s 1987. Sicilian.
1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Be3 e6 7. f3 Nbd7 8. Qd2 b5 9. 0-0-0 Bb7 10. g4 h6 11. h4 Nc5 12. Bh3 g6 13. g5 hxg5 14. b4!? In conjunction with his 12th this has the clever idea that after 14 . . . Ncd7 15. hxg5 White is threatening Bxe6. Black responds by sacrificing a piece for 3 pawns. **gxh4 15. bxc5 dxc5 16. Nb3 Qxd2+ 17. Rxd2 Rc8 18. Rhd1 c4** 18 . . . Be7 would fail the same way — to 19. Nxc5. White's control of the d-file is too much for Black to cope with. **19. Nc5! Bc6 20. Nxa6 b4 21. Nc7+ Rxc7 22. Rd8+ Ke7 23. Bc5 mate 1-0.**

Problem
In this position from **Yusupov-Tukmakov, Minsk 1987** play continued **30 . . . Rh8 31. Bb5 Kg5 32. Kd2.** Black did win, but only thanks to a subsequent time-trouble error by White. Can you find a more convincing continuation? Solution next week.



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© 1987 Statesman & Nation Publishing Co Ltd & contributors
Published by The Statesman & Nation Publishing Co Ltd
Distributed by NS Distribution

Editor: John Lloyd; **Books and Arts Editor:** Harriett Gilbert; **Writers:** Sarah Benton, Duncan Campbell, Jane Dibblin, Rob Edwards (Scotland), Patrick Forbes, Peter Kellner (Political Editor), John Rentoul; **Deputy Books & Arts Editor:** Malcolm Imrie; **Poetry Editor:** Hugo Williams; **Production Manager:** Joanne Hurst; **Art Editor:** Vicky Hutchings; **Editorial Assistant:** Jane Thomas

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Subscription rates: UK & Eire £40; Europe (air mail only £46); rest of world: air speeded £51; air mail £61. USA: air speeded $70; air mail $85. Canada: air speeded Can $90; air mail Can $115.

Second class postage paid at New York, NY USPS 382260. Air freight in US by Speedimpex USA Inc. (US Postmaster: Address changes should be sent to New Statesman, Speedimpex USA Inc., 45-45 39th Street, Long Island City, NY 11104)

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This England

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☐ A man was undergoing an emergency operation yesterday after his finger was bitten off when a group of men burst into a condom-makers' sales conference at the Grand Hotel, Brighton. The severed finger was found beneath a piano. — *The Times* (P.H. Cox)

☐ People in the North think that we in the South are a lot better off and as a result we are victims of a surcharge. For three years we have stayed bed-and-breakfast at the same place in Blackpool. Last year we found we were paying £2 each extra above those who were Northerners! — Letter in *Daily Express* (Derek Morgan)

☐ A modest investment in a simple box of pins would have earned a good return in the City of London yesterday. As eager, last-minute applicants for Rolls Royce shares queued at the Natwest Bank in Princes Street, the nearest stationer in Cheapside was turning away scores of people desperately searching for pins with which to attach their cheques to the share application forms. 'We sold out within minutes of opening,' said the manager. — *Financial Times* (Jeff Prestridge)

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